

CHAPTER ONE

THE INITIAL PURSUIT AND SATISFACTION

(1:2—2:7)

This section is the key to the whole book. All the spiritual principles are contained in this section. It foreshadows all subsequent experiences. The lessons that follow are not new; rather, they are old lessons repeated in a deeper way.

The spiritual experiences in the first section are smooth and easy. The first consecration and revelation always appear to be smooth and easy. However, this consecration and revelation may not be very dependable; there is the need for these experiences to pass through the fire. This section foreshadows the spiritual experiences that are coming. After this section, everything will be tested until it becomes real. The first time a person experiences something, the impression may not be very deep; the second time, the experience may be more advanced and more sure. Yet the second experience may not be as sweet as the first. In the end the experience is the same as that which was encountered at the beginning; the banner is still love.

The experience in this section is equivalent to the "Path of Light" in the book *Spiritual Torrents*; it is also equivalent to the "revival stage" in the book *Four Planes of Spiritual Life*. Our personal experience can surely testify to this.

I. YEARNING (1:2-3)

Verse 2 says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine." The kisses that one seeks after here are different from the kiss of the Father upon the neck (Luke 15:20). That kiss was a sign of forgiveness, and everyone who belongs to the Lord has received that kiss already. The emphasis in the Song of Songs is the love relationship between the believers and the Lord. As such, forgiveness is an implicit fact. Therefore, there is no mention of forgiveness. The Song of Songs does not speak of how a person turns from the position of a sinner to the position of a believer; rather, it speaks of how a believer turns from a position of thirst to a position of satisfaction. We must remember this fact before we can understand the way the book begins.

After a person is saved, we do not know how long it takes before there is a longing within him. However, we do know that a longing arises when a saved person is awakened by the Holy Spirit and begins to seek after the Lord.

Because the seeker is full of hunger and thirst, her mouth spontaneously utters, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." She does not say who "him" is. But in her mind, there is only one "him"; it is the One she seeks after. Prior to this, her relationship with the Lord was general, and she was deeply dissatisfied with it. Now she hopes to have a more personal relationship with Him. Therefore, she longs for a "kiss," which is a personal expression of love. No one can kiss two people at the same time. A kiss is an expression of a personal relationship. Furthermore, these kisses are not on the cheek, as were Judas's (Matt. 26:49), nor on the feet, as were Mary's (Luke 7:38, 45). They are the "kisses of his mouth," a sign of personal affection. A general relationship can no longer

satisfy her. She wants a personal relationship which no one else has. This inward urge is the beginning of all progress. Spiritual edification can never be separated from a pursuit that is based on hunger and thirst. If the Holy Spirit has not put a real dissatisfaction with a general relationship and a pursuit for personal affection within a believer, he can never expect to have an intimate experience of the Lord. This pursuit is the basis for all future experience. If we do not have such a hunger and thirst, we will only have a poetic song, and it will not be the Song of Songs.

We pursue because we have received a vision. The Holy Spirit has shown us a vision which ordinary men have not seen. After we have received such a revelation, we find that "thy love is better than wine." Therefore, we long for the kisses of His mouth.

Indeed, His love is better than wine. Of everything that brings us joy, elation, and excitement, the Holy Spirit shows us that nothing can be compared to His love. Of all that entices us under the sun, nothing can be compared to His love. Once we have seen and known His love, is there anything under the sun that can compare with it?

Verse 3 says, "Because of the savor of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." Lord, You are the anointed One. God has anointed You with the Holy Spirit, and You have received all kinds of ointment from the Holy Spirit. Not only does God smell Your savor, but we smell it as well. We have not heard about this savor from anyone, and we have not seen it in any place. Rather, we are touched spontaneously with the loveliness of the savor of Your ointment.

"Thy name is as ointment poured forth." Lord, You also have a name that attracts us. Through Your name, we are reminded that God has come. The ointment has been poured out! We realize that You have died! Indeed, the ointment has been poured forth! How precious is the name of Jesus! Who can fathom the savor of this name?

"Therefore do the virgins love thee." Because of Yourself (the ointment) and Your name (the ointment poured forth), the virgins love You. They love You because of Yourself, and because of Your name. We cannot love a work, and we cannot love a power. We can only love a person, one who has a personality. We love You, and we are attracted by Yourself and Your name. Although we have not yet fully perceived Your savor, what we have perceived is enough for us to love You. The revelation of the person of the Lord invokes not only praise from men, but also love. The beginning of love in everyone toward the Lord is a vision of His person.

"The virgins" here are the "hidden ones" (Psa. 83:3). They are the companions of the maiden, and they are equally chaste and earnest in seeking after the Lord. The maiden is not the only one who is walking on the spiritual pathway; she is only one among many virgins.

II. PURSUIT (1:4)

Verse 4 says, "Draw me, we will run after thee." Although we have the desire and the willingness to pursue after Him, we cannot help but feel a lack of strength for the pursuit. This

strength for the pursuit is not a mighty power from the Spirit that is given to us once for all. Rather, the Lord's own beauty and glory draw us. His drawing power is our pursuing power. If the Lord has truly drawn us, it is very easy for us to pursue after Him.

If You draw us, "we will run after thee." Running after is pursuing something continuously. The power to run after the Lord comes from the drawing of the Lord. We must realize that no one can come before the Lord by himself. When we were sinners, we needed God's drawing before we could come to the Lord. Similarly, after becoming believers, we need the Lord's drawing before we can run after Him.

Here we see the relationship between an individual believer and other believers. "Me" is drawn, but "we" are running after the Lord. "Me" has been brought into the chambers, but "we" will rejoice and be glad. If a man receives grace before the Lord, others will surely be affected by him.

III. FELLOWSHIP (1:4)

Verse 4 continues, "The King hath brought me into his chambers." After the maiden prays, we see her prayer being answered: "The King hath brought me into his chambers." The "chambers" are the "secret place" (Psa. 91:1), which are the bedrooms. Unless we have very deep friendship with a person, we will not bring him into our chambers. Therefore, when the King brings her into the chambers, it signifies the beginning of fellowship and revelation. In the chambers she tastes of a fellowship that was previously unknown. But more than this, she sees something that she has not seen before.

The word "King" indicates that before we know the Lord as our Beloved, we must first know Him as our King. A life of consecration always comes before a life of love, and a satisfying experience always comes after an act of consecration. "The King hath brought me into his chambers." She has previously known Him as her King. But now the King will show her the experience of the chambers.

Those who are with the maiden can now lift up their heads as their future unfolds before them. There is no limit to their future. Once the experience of the chambers begins, hope abounds in a life of love. They know that since God has begun the work, He will surely complete it (Phil. 1:6). Therefore, they say, "We will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine." These are words for the future. Their present experience fills them with hope for the future (cf. Prov. 23:35 for an example of seeking associated with wine).

"The upright love thee" should be translated, "They love thee in uprightness." This means that their love comes out of a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:5).

IV. THE REVELATION IN THE INNER CHAMBERS (1:5-7)

Verse 5 says, "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon." Who are the "daughters of Jerusalem"? This is a poem. Therefore, the Jerusalem mentioned here does not refer to the earthly Jerusalem, but to the heavenly Jerusalem. Since these daughters are within the realm of the heavenly Jerusalem, they must be saved ones. Calling them "daughters" means that they are

begotten of God. However, they are not very seeking; they are a cold, ignorant, and careless group of people. Mr. Hudson Taylor said, "They appear to be the saved ones, but are perhaps barely saved."

"I am black, but comely." The first result of being in the chambers is to discover one's own blackness. Without the experience of pursuit, there is no possibility of seeing. Now the maiden sees the kind of person she is. This may be the first time she has seen her own blackness. She did not become black. This blackness was already present; it speaks of everything that is in Adam. However, at the same time, she sees that she is accepted in the Son of His love. Hence, she says, "I am black, but comely." Comeliness refers to her acceptance in the Son of His love.

"As the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon." "Kedar" means a dark chamber. Being as the tents of Kedar means being outwardly dark and uncomely. If "the curtains of Solomon" are made of fine linen, they must refer to Christ's righteousness. The righteousnesses mentioned in Revelation 19:8 refers to the saints' righteousnesses which come from the work of the Holy Spirit. But this is the Old Testament, and cannot refer to the saints' righteousnesses. These curtains should be in the temple. "As the curtains of Solomon" refers to inward beauty, that is, one's beauty before God.

Verse 6 says, "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

"Sun" in the original language has a definite article with it. Through God's enlightening in the chambers, she realizes that she is black. Therefore, she does not want anyone to look at her. This is her mental state at the moment. Before the Holy Spirit completes His deep work in a man, he may still want to cover himself before others. But after the Holy Spirit has done a deep enough work, a man will no longer try to hide anything from others. At this point, the maiden's appearance before men is the same as it is before God. As a result, she is willing to confess, "I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me."

"My mother's children were angry with me." The verse does not say "my father's children," but "my mother's children," because mother signifies the principle of promise, which is the principle of God's grace. Galatians 4:26-28 says that the Jerusalem above is our mother and that we, like Isaac, are children of promise. "My mother's children" are those who have become God's children according to the principle of God's grace.

"Children" is translated "sons" in the American Standard Version. "Sons" signifies something objective. These sons of the mother are strong in doctrine and in objective things, and they are somewhat authoritative. Because of the maiden's love for God and the discipline of the chambers, there is a change in her work. Her mother's sons begin to despise her and even become angry with her.

"They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." The first mention of "vineyard" is plural in number; it is organized by man. The second mention of

"vineyard" is singular in number; it is ordained by God. "They made me the keeper of the vineyards." This was her former work. After she has received God's enlightening and is dealt with by Him, she realizes the vanity of her former work—she has only done what man entrusted to her, but not what God ordained for her.

Verse 7 says, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" The word "loveth" is a verb. "Turneth aside" can be translated as "wanders astray."

In the chambers, she has already realized the vanity of her outward works. She already realizes that a Christian's need is not work, but personal food and rest. The word "feedeth" speaks of food. From now on, she will only seek after food and rest. This "rest" is a complete rest, because "noon" is the time of perfection. The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day, which is noon (Prov. 4:18). Noon is the perfect position. When the sun reaches noon, it will not grow any brighter. (The Lord suffered from noon to the ninth hour. His sufferings descended upon Him all at once; they came with great intensity from the beginning, and did not increase gradually.)

"Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" These "companions" are the Lord's companions. The flock, however, is not the Lord's flock, but the flock of His companions. Being turned aside is to be put to shame. She is outside of the flock, and she has to say, "Why are You not telling me where to find food and rest? I have been searching for food and rest; I have searched here and there." Because she has been led astray by the flock of His companions and is being ridiculed and criticized, she asks, "Lord, why would You not tell me?"

V. THE KING'S SPEAKING (1:8-11)

This maiden sees three things in the chambers: (1) She sees the blackness in Adam and the fairness in the Son of His love; (2) she sees the vanity of outward work through God's dealing; and (3) she also sees the spiritual need. Hence, the Lord answers her according to her seeking, and He praises her and makes a promise to her.

A. The King's Answer (1:8)

Verse 8 says, "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents."

The King calls her "fairest among women." "If thou know not"—the tone of this sentence seems to indicate that the King is rebuking her and that she should have already known about such a thing. "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock." On the one hand, "the footsteps of the flock" signifies the footsteps of the believers today; these believers are taking the standing of one flock, that is, the standing of the church. (Although there are many sheep, they have not gathered as a flock, and they are not taking the standing of the church.) Here one can find food and rest. On the other hand, the flock also signifies the saints who have died and have gone on before us throughout the past generations. They have found

food and rest. We can also find food and rest if we go to the place where they were. The word "footsteps" means experience.

The kids are not the sheep, because the maiden herself is a sheep. Nor are they the flock, because she is outside of the flock. The kids are the lambs who are younger than she. "Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." This reminds her not to forget her duty toward the kids in her daily life, as a result of her pursuit for food and rest, and not to lock up the gates of the kids. This is something to be watchful about. While we are seeking after food and rest, we must still fulfill our duty toward immature disciples. We cannot close the door and seek only our own edification. Putting it another way, she can derive her food and rest from feeding the kids!

The word "shepherds" is plural in number. These are the under-shepherds, those who are under the Lord. The word "tents" is plural in number. The Lord intends that she secure a place for herself beside all the other shepherds and feed the kids among them. On the one hand, she has to follow the by-gone saints in their consecration, faith, endurance, trust, pursuit after God's will, dedication to prayer, and so forth. On the other hand, in her daily life she must still care for those believers who are younger than she is, and she must fulfill her duty this way. While we are pursuing, we must not give up our daily duties.

B. The King's Praise and Promise (1:9-11)

Verses 9 to 11 say, "I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver."

The words "my love" may be translated "my beloved friend." The word "horses" means "good horses" in the original language. All the horses at Solomon's time came from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28-29). Verses 9 and 10 describe the beauty the maiden possesses in her natural constitution. Verse 11 describes God's work and the beauty that comes from God.

These three verses speak of six things: (1) horses, (2) cheeks, (3) rows of jewels, (4) the neck, (5) borders of gold, and (6) studs of silver. Let us consider these items one by one:

1. The Horses

The Bible characterizes horses by one thing: their swiftness. Psalm 147:10 mentions "the strength of horses." The "horses in Pharaoh's chariots" signifies the best among all the horses. Spiritually speaking, it denotes swiftness. A horse is a symbol of natural swiftness. It is swift because it is strong. The swiftness in this verse can be compared to the running in 1:4. The maiden is swift, but her swiftness is only a swiftness that is from the world.

2. The Cheeks

The beauty of a person is determined by the cheeks. This means that the cheeks signify the most beautiful part.

3. Rows of Jewels

The cheeks are made beautiful by rows of jewels. The "rows of jewels" are the braidings of the hair. Hair refers to natural strength. This shows that the maiden's beauty is derived from her natural strength, which implies her goodness in the natural realm.

4. The Neck

The adornment on the neck signifies the maiden's natural gentleness. The neck was stiff, but now there is adornment. This shows her natural gentleness. A neck that is without a necklace signifies a stubborn neck.

Verse 9 compares her to a company of horses, while verse 10 points out the reason she was compared to the horses. She is swift because of her natural strength and gentleness. Although the revelation of the chambers has resulted in a spiritual pursuit on her part, her natural swiftness, that is, her natural strength and gentleness, is still at work. Perhaps the reason for the lack of advance in many people is their natural swiftness! Verses 9 and 10 reveal that although she is beautiful, her beauty is natural. Only the beauty that comes from God is true beauty. The Lord promises to make two things for her. "We will make." This is the King's promise. The Holy Spirit reminds us of the Triune God here.

5. Borders of Gold

It takes considerable time to beat gold into borders. Borders of gold signify a fine work, a most fine manifestation of God's life. The word "borders" in the original language means something that resembles a crown. It is a ring, a crown of golden borders. This word is the same word as "rows" in verse 10, which can be translated as "braidings." Hence, "borders of gold" can also be translated as "braidings of gold." Replacing the natural braidings of the hair with braidings of gold means replacing one's natural strength with God's righteousness, life, and glory. It means replacing that which is from man with that which is from God.

6. Studs of Silver

Silver signifies redemption. Being studded with silver means being founded upon the redemptive work of the cross.

VI. THE MAIDEN'S SPEAKING (1:12-14)

A. The Ever-present Indwelling Christ (1:12-13)

Verse 12 says, "While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." The Bible pays special attention to Solomon's table (1 Kings 4:22-23; 10:5). "The King sitteth at his table." This refers to the believers' enjoyment of the Lord's riches. These riches can be divided into two categories: (1) the flour and the meal, which signify the Lord Jesus' life and the Lord Himself, and (2) the meats, which refer to His work and His death. "While the King sitteth at his table" is the time of our feeding and enjoyment. Every time we come to the King's table, we are dealing with the matter of food. We are those who eat God's accepted sacrifices, that is,

the work which God has accepted. (In the Old Testament, parts of the sacrifices were set aside for man's eating.)

How do we eat God's accepted sacrifices? When God sees the Lord's death, He sees a sacrifice of propitiation. When we see the Lord's death, we see not only a substitution, but a union as well. Once we see this, we will have the fragrance and praise. If we have not seen that God's accepted sacrifice is our enjoyment, we will not have consecration and praise. But when we see that we enjoy the same thing that God enjoys, the ointment of spikenard will spontaneously flow out. (We can see the outpouring of the ointment of spikenard from the story of Mary.) First the Lord gives to us; then we give back to the Lord. First there is enjoyment, and then there is consecration.

Verse 13 says, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." Myrrh signifies suffering, which is the cross. When the Lord was dying, someone gave Him vinegar, which means bitterness. After the Lord's death, Nicodemus anointed the Lord's body with myrrh, which means death. Any time the word night is used in this book, it refers to a time when Solomon is absent. Spiritually, it means the time when the Lord is absent, when He is not in this world. The two breasts in the Bible refer to faith and love (1 Thes. 5:8).

Verses 12 and 13 speak of the indwelling Christ. Sitting together at the table in verse 12 surely means eating together, and the condition for being at the same table is to open the door, the inner door (Rev. 3:20-21). If a person does not open his inner door, he cannot sit at the same table with the Lord. Myrrh signifies the crucified Christ. When Christ is not with us, we have to guard ourselves with faith and love. This is the beginning of inward fellowship. After we have been brought into the chambers, after we have seen the Lord's death, and after we have truly consecrated ourselves, we begin to have an inward fellowship with Him. When we open the door of our heart, we will enjoy Him, and there will be the need for true consecration. Only then can we truly follow a suffering and crucified Christ. We follow the crucified Christ with the love and faith that are within us.

B. Putting On the Outward Christ (1:14)

Verse 14 says, "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi." Camphire is henna, and it is used for fingernail dye. Jewish women carried camphire wherever they went. Engedi is the name of a place in Judea. The meaning of Engedi is "the fountain of the lamb." It is the place to which David fled, and it is a wilderness (Josh. 15:61-62; 1 Sam. 23:29). The word "vineyards" should be translated "the place of the grapes." One cannot see the vine flower in the place of the grapes; no flower is found in the place of the grapes. This place of the grapes is in the wilderness. If a flower appears in this place, it will be very conspicuous.

Verse 14 covers a wider area than verse 13. The henna flower appearing in the place of the grapes speaks of Christ's distinctiveness being manifested and accentuated. Myrrh is between the breasts and cannot be seen. Hence, it refers to the inward Christ. In this verse Christ is the outward adornment, and the maiden has put on Christ. This means that Christ is confessed and testified outwardly. Before men Christ is the henna flower; He is now being manifested through the maiden.

VII. THE KING'S PRAISE (1:15)

Verse 15 says, "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes." This praise is for the purpose of encouraging her. The first "thou art fair" encourages her, whereas the second "thou art fair" praises her eyes as being doves' eyes. The eyes of a dove, in their literal sense, are a description of the beauty of the eyes. Spiritually speaking, this means having spiritual insight. As far as their function is concerned, doves' eyes can only see one thing at one time. Therefore, functionally speaking, this means purity. The maiden has received revelation; she has obtained spiritual insight. She has also put the myrrh between her breasts, and she has a pure heart. Hence, the King can now praise her.

VIII. THE MAIDEN'S RESPONSE (1:16—2:1)

Verse 16 says, "Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant." He is not only fair, but pleasant. This is her response to the King.

"Also our bed is green." The maiden has attained the rest which she had previously sought. There is feeding as well. The grass is the bed, and the reclining is the rest. This matches Psalm 23:2, which says, "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me to waters of rest." The table which was mentioned previously also has the element of rest, but the emphasis there was on eating. Here the bed has an element of eating, but the emphasis is on rest. If a shepherd is not skillful, his sheep will not stop eating when they are put in a green pasture. But if the shepherd is skillful, his sheep will be able to lie down even though they are in the green pasture. They will have satisfaction and rest.

Verse 17 says, "The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir." The fir is cypress. The cedar is a tall and strong tree. In the Bible, it refers to a humanity that is filled with glory. Many things in the Bible are made of cedar. Many things are made of cypress. Cypress is produced in a place called "death city." The Jews planted cypress beside their graves. Hence, cypress signifies the Lord's death.

Under such a condition, the maiden is at rest. Grass signifies everything that is living, that has life, and that can serve as food. We can only rest when we lie on top of this grass. Our shelter is the Lord's glorious humanity and His death. In Solomon's temple, there were two chief kinds of wood—cedar and cypress. In other words, only these two kinds of wood are qualified to be material for God's habitation. God dwells among the cedar and the cypress. We can now rest in God's dwelling place.

Verse 2:1 says, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." This verse comes immediately after 1:17. This word is not spoken by the King, but by the maiden. If this word were spoken by the King, it would be hard to interpret. If this were the King's word, it would not make sense for him to say in the next verse that the maiden is a lily. "Sharon" is a plain, and the "rose" can be considered as a kind of wild lily or wild rose. This flower is considered a despicable plant in the land of Judea. The lily of the valleys is ordinary and unassuming. It is "the lily of the valleys," and not "the lily of the pot." It is not cared for by man, but by God.

The maiden acknowledges that she is a rose of Sharon and a lily of the valleys because the King praises her in 1:15. On the one hand, in 1:16-17 she praises the King, and on the other hand, she mentions rest. She mentions herself as merely being a rose of the wilderness and a lily of the valleys. This means that she is not worth anything in herself and that she is but an ordinary person cared for by God.

IX. THE KING'S REPLY (2:2)

Verse 2 says, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." The King is saying that she is indeed a lily, not in contrast to the valleys, but in contrast to the thorns. This means that the maiden is a lily, whereas everyone else is just thorns.

According to the Bible, thorns refer to two things. First, they refer to man's natural life after Adam's fall. The basis for saying this is Genesis 3:18. There the thorns grew by themselves and did not come out as a result of sowing. Another basis for saying this is in Exodus 3, the chapter on the thornbush. The fire was burning, yet the thornbush was not consumed. The fire and the light did not come from the thorns themselves, but from God. God used the thorns, but He did not cause any loss to the thorns. This means that God would use Moses to deal with the Israelites and the Gentiles according to Himself, and not according to man's natural life. A proper testimony has, as its capital, not things from man, but things from God. God did not use anything that came from Moses; He only used that which issued from Himself. Second, the thorns signify that which grows out of the natural realm. This refers to the results of sin and the natural self. It is typified by the thorns in Matthew 13:7. The thorns in Hebrews 6:8 signify the fruit that comes out of a person's own self-will, whose end is to be burned.

The word "daughters" is "maidens" (RSV); it is plural in number. These maidens are not the daughters of Jerusalem. The Lord considers those who pursue after Him as lilies, unlike those who are born of sin. The Lord declares them to be different from those who live in sin. There is sinful living and the natural life all around them, but these ones are different. They are the ones who have faith (the lilies). At the same time, this hints at the sufferings a seeker endures in the midst of an environment of natural and sinful living.

X. THE MAIDEN'S PRAISE AND ENJOYMENT (2:3-6)

Verse 3 says, "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."

Now she takes her turn to compare the King to the sinners. "The sons" refer to all the things that capture one's heart, everything that is desired (Gen. 3:6), everything that can serve as the master of one's heart, and everyone to whom the believer's heart would turn.

Notice the words "apple tree among the trees." In the original language "apple" is "bergamot orange." It is an evergreen plant and does not shed its leaves in winter.

Outwardly, it looks somewhat like a pomegranate, and it tastes somewhat like an orange and lemon. "The sons" can only be compared to ordinary trees, whereas the beloved has three characteristics: (1) He can become a forest. Emphasis is placed on the word "wood," which denotes tallness. (2) His overshadowing never fails. He is an evergreen and therefore provides shade all the time. (3) He bears fruit. Many trees are green but do not bear fruit. He is tall, overshadowing, and fruitful. The maiden has come to realize the Lord as the One who is all in all.

Prior to this, she has given herself fully to the Lord. But now she declares her testimony; these are the words out of her mouth, what she says publicly to all men. She not only acknowledges that He is the wine, but she praises the wine itself. At this time no person or thing can usurp her heart any longer. There are no longer divisions in the church into those of Paul and those of Apollos, which divisions are but things of the flesh (1 Cor. 3:3-4). Now the Lord has filled her sight.

"With great delight" can be translated as "joyously." Sitting down under His shadow means being exalted, and it carries the sense of being raptured. One is joyous because he sits under His shadow, meaning that he feels as if he is being raptured to His presence.

The shadow is in contrast to and echoes the shining of the sun in 1:6. Here is rest (Psa. 91:1).

"His fruit was sweet." The eating in Song of Songs 2:3 is somewhat different from the eating in 1:12. There the emphasis was on the Lord Himself. Here the fruit refers to what the Lord's life and work have acquired for us, such as justification, sanctification, peace, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. On the one hand, she rejoices at His presence. On the other hand, she enjoys what He has acquired for her in His presence. Every time we taste this fruit, it is sweet to our taste.

Verse 1:4 speaks of running after, whereas 1:8 speaks of following. In 1:12-14 she may be sitting down, but nothing is said of her posture. In 1:16-17 there is no explicit verb. In this verse (2:3) she properly "sat down" to enjoy His presence. It seems as if her condition is officially acknowledged. In 1:16-17 she was resting already; this verse is merely an official announcement of what she enjoyed and acquired in 1:16-17. The actual history is in 1:16-17, whereas this verse is a narration of that history.

Verse 4 says, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." The banqueting house can be translated as the house of wine; it is the place where one is free to enjoy as much as he desires. The King's bringing her in here is the second bringing (the first being in 1:4). The enjoyment of the fruit and the banqueting house is somewhat different from the table of the King. The banqueting house is the place where one entertains guests; the emphasis is on joy. Once there is the first consecration, and once a person passes through the way of the cross and sees all the achievements that the Lord has accomplished for him, he is spontaneously brought to the house of wine. In other words, the King brings us into the chambers for the purpose of giving us revelation,

and He brings us into the house of wine for the purpose of giving us joy, the joy of the presence of the King.

"His banner over me was love." This means that love is the unfurled standard. The whole matter relates to love. A banner shows what one does; it is a kind of motto. Our banner is love, which means that everything we do is based on love.

Verse 5 says, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love." The word "comfort" may be translated as "revive." To be sick of love is to be joyous to the point of exhaustion. This is like Mr. Moody, who was so filled with joy that he could no longer bear it; he had to ask the Lord to stop it.

The main point of this verse is a beckoning for moderation. It is good to be in His presence, but the experience of the saints of old shows us that when they were overwhelmed, they fell down as dead. This verse says that what the maiden enjoys is more than she can handle. There is a measure to our capacity to enjoy the Lord. We have to ask the Lord to increase our strength before we can enjoy more. Otherwise, when we see too much, our capacity will come short of what we want to enjoy. An earthen vessel does not have enough capacity; there is a need to receive more strength from the Lord to increase our capacity for enjoyment.

Verse 6 says, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." "His left hand is under my head." This means He is lifting the maiden's head to behold Him. The most natural position to embrace someone is to embrace with the right hand. The emphasis is on the protection and support of love. The emphasis is not on the support of strength, but the support of intimacy. In other words, after one has enjoyed the Lord's love, there is still the need for the support of His grace.

XI. THE KING'S CHARGE (2:7)

Verse 7 says, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." Both the Darby translation and the margin of the American Standard Version use the word "gazelles," whereas the King James Version and the text of the American Standard Version uses the word "roes." The Revised Standard Version, the American Standard Version, and Darby's translation all use the word "hinds." The word "he" should not be in the masculine gender. We dare not say whether it should be in the feminine gender or the neuter gender. But according to the context, it should be in the feminine gender. "I charge you." This is in the imperative mood; it is the tone of a king.

Song of Songs 1:2 through 2:7 constitutes one section of spiritual experience. Then the Lord causes the maiden to pause a little. At this point, a person has reached the stage that he should arrive at, not sensationally, but peacefully and steadily. He has come out of the chambers and entered the house of wine. At this point a believer has smoothly reached the house of wine, and the Lord is asking him to halt a little.

The daughters of Jerusalem love excitement, and they love to meddle with many things. Therefore, the Lord tells them not to stir up the maiden.

Roes and hinds are by nature animals that are easily stirred up. The King gives this charge because the maiden has become sick of love. There is no need to stir her up any more; she can pause a little while. She is in the Lord's hand, and there is no need for others to arouse her. If others try to meddle with her affairs, it will not help her. Instead, it will only stir her up. She should rest for a while and wait for this period to end before she engages in a second pursuit. Do not stir her up. Wait for her to rise by herself. Do not think that she is too soulish and that she needs help. This is where her lessons have brought her, and there should be a pause.

Love has reached its climax. The King is present; therefore, be still (Hab. 2:20). He (the Lord) will rest in His love (Zeph. 3:17). This means He will love you in repose.

CONCLUSION

(1)The maiden sees the cross in the first chapter; she has not seen the vitality and power of resurrection.

(2)The danger in the first section is indulging in an inward fellowship.

(3)She still does not understand the meaning and significance of consecration and of the obedience of the cross, because she has not yet passed through the test. She has not practically taken up the cross and has not practically taken up the way of the cross.

(4)There is another danger. Although she has seen the error of presumptuousness, she has not seen that the Master of the work is greater than the work itself. (Although she has realized that it is wrong to keep other vineyards, she still thinks that it is very important to keep her own vineyard.)

(5)There is also a lack. During all this time, she has only seen the Lord's worth to her; she has not seen the position she should take before the Lord. In other words, she has enjoyed the fruit of the Lord's travail, but she has not allowed the Lord to enjoy the fruit of His travail. This means that she has gained the Lord, but the Lord has not yet gained her.

(6)In the first section, it is only Christ for me; it is not yet me for Christ.