

CHAPTER TWO

THE CALL FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THE SELF (2:8—3:5)

I. THE CALL FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THE SELF (2:8-15)

In this section there is no mention of the maiden's sins or failures. Instead we see the necessary stages that a person goes through on a spiritual journey. The maiden has her shortcomings, and in this section we see what she should have gained, but has not gained.

A. The Power of Resurrection (2:8-9)

Verse 8 says, "The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." She rejoices at the voice of her beloved, and she loves the joy of his presence. Yet she has not followed the voice of her beloved, and there is no actual obedience.

Verse 9 says, "My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice." Both Darby's translation and the margin of the American Standard Version render "roe" as "gazelle," but the King James Version and the text of the American Standard Version render it as "roe." Three versions—the King James Version, the American Standard Version, and Darby's New Translation—use "a young hart."

The only place where the Lord is associated with a hart is in the heading to Psalm 22, where there is the expression "the hind of the dawn" (RSV) or "the hind of the morning" (ASV, margin). All Bible scholars agree that this refers to the morning of the first day of the week, when Christ resurrected. Morning is the beginning of another day, while resurrection is the beginning of a new day. It is the starting point of a person's spiritual life, and it is signified by a new day.

Both verses 8 and 9 speak of the vitality of resurrection. In the Bible, both the mountains and the hills refer to difficulties and barriers. "He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." This means that nothing is too high or too great to stop Him.

The Lord is the Lord of resurrection. Christ has resurrected; He has overcome all difficulties and barriers. Difficulties and barriers are things of yesterday. He is living in the next day. All difficulties are beneath His feet. The minute He leaps, all the barriers are behind Him.

In this section, the Lord manifests His resurrection power, and He is speaking to the maiden in a living way. She did not know of such things in her experience in the previous chapter. She ran before, but she did not know what it was like to leap upon the mountains and skip upon the hills. In order to teach her the lesson, the Lord calls her.

Since she already has an intimate relationship with the Lord, it is easy for her to recognize His voice.

But there is an obvious problem—a wall exists between her and the Lord. The wall encloses her, and it keeps the Lord out. Yet she does not see anything wrong with the wall. As a result, she does not say "my wall," but "our wall," meaning that the wall belongs to both her and to the Lord. She intends for that wall to enclose herself and the Lord and to keep the world and everything else out. Then she would have fellowship with the Lord and rest in Him and live happily within the wall. She would be able to find the Lord within her heart all the time, and she could ignore circumstances, persons, the brothers and sisters, daily duties, and many trials. She could turn inward to the Lord and forget about the world. She only knows the sweetness of fellowship, but does not know the power of work and the fierceness of warfare. There is only the thought of making three tents on the mountain, and no thought is given to the mass of sinners at the base of the mountain. Demons can be with the sinners at the base of the mountain, as long as the Lord is within her heart on the mountain. It may be true that she has the Lord's presence, but the life within the "tents" has deprived sinners from experiencing deliverance from the demons. In other words, she is always turning inward to seek the joy of the Lord's presence. This is her wall. This is a danger believers face after they have realized that Christ lives within them.

Spiritually speaking, this does not mean that the Lord can leave our heart. Being behind the wall means two things. First, the Lord is standing, not sitting. Previously, He was sitting at the table. Now He is ready to make a move. Standing is the first step a person takes before moving. Just as sitting leads to rest, standing leads to work. Second, it means that the Lord is outside. The power of resurrection is able to leap over the mountains and skip over the hills. Therefore, we should not keep Him within the wall.

The maiden needs to learn to let go of the Lord within and allow Him to lead her out. She should not try to hold on to the Lord with her own strength, but she should allow the Lord to lead her on. She should learn to trust in the Lord's word and to follow Him by exercising her faith to leap over the mountains and skip over the hills. She should learn to live by something other than just the feeling of the Lord's presence. Thank the Lord, even though man can put up a wall, God can set apart some windows for Himself. If there are not any large windows, there will at least be some small lattices. God can always find a way to enlighten the heart of those who have consecrated themselves to Him.

This wall is the wall of our introspection. It causes us to miss the Lord. But God has set apart windows and lattices for Himself for us to see through. A wall means an attempt to keep the Lord within. When this happens, the world is kept out. The Lord is trying to deliver the maiden out of this condition. He is teaching her to realize that His presence can be found under any circumstance; there is no need to look for Him only within herself. She should learn to know Christ more from the environment than from within. The Lord is omnipresent. Andrew Murray once said that the Lord's presence should be felt not only in our prayer, but in our factory as well.

What is the Lord doing outside the wall? He is standing and waiting to make a move. However, a person who is constantly looking inward and who concentrates on his own feeling of joy cannot understand anything even after he has learned the Lord's thought. Although he may hear the

Lord's voice, he will not understand it. The Lord has to speak again before he can understand anything clearly.

B. The Riches of Resurrection (2:10-13)

Verse 10 says, "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." The Lord speaks very clearly here; He wants the maiden to rise up and come away. This does not mean that inward experiences are wrong. If they were wrong, the Lord would not have given them to her. But if she continued in this way, she would not be able to contact the outside; the minute she contacted the outside, she would seem to lose her peace. Therefore, she has to seek for His mountain-leaping, hill-skipping presence. Madame Guyon said, "Once His presence was a question of time and place, but now it is no longer a question of time and place. When we can trust that the Lord's presence is within us wherever we are, we will not be deceived by our inward feelings."

Verse 11 says, "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone." Since the Lord is calling her to come away with Him, He speaks of His past experiences and the present facts.

"Winter" is a time of dryness, coldness, lack of growth, and testing. During the first part of her experience, the Lord brought her through these things. It seems as if the Lord has clearly brought her out of all the testings, coldness, dryness, and apparent deadness. With His undeniable presence, the Lord has driven winter away without her even being conscious of it.

The rain is not the spring rain, but the winter rain. It is the rain that chills and turns into snow. The winter rain keeps man inside the house and stops him from doing any work. Hence, the rain refers to trials (Gen. 6—7; Matt. 7:25-27). The Lord tells us that many past trials are behind us as a result of His presence. The passing of the winter rain indicates two things: (1) the present crosses, that is, the trials, are over, and (2) the Lord's cross is over, that is, the work of His cross is accomplished, and we should not dwell constantly on His death.

Verses 12 and 13 say, "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." The Lord wants us now to stand on the ground of resurrection. After a time of death, spring, the time of resurrection, is here. These verses tell us that we should understand our position in resurrection. Both verses describe the condition of resurrection; they speak of spring after winter. If spring is mentioned without first mentioning winter, it means that there is only life without resurrection. But when spring is mentioned after winter, it indicates resurrection. The Lord shows her all the things that are in resurrection, so that she will no longer pay attention to the dead, cold, dry, and wilted winter.

"Flowers" signify the adornment of beauty, and "birds" signify the sound of singing. The flowers are manifested on the earth, and the birds sing in the air. Flowers speak of art,

and birds speak of music. According to Matthew 6, both flowers and birds are under God's special care. God cares for them so much that they can sing and show forth their beauty.

"The voice of the turtle" may be the sound of praise. It is also the sound of a love-call.

"The fig tree putteth forth..." These figs are winter figs. They signify fruit that still remains after passing through death. This fruit has passed through the cross and has been tested, but it still remains.

"The vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance" (RSV). The vines are just blossoming; this is in the present tense. This means the situation is full of the hope of fruit-bearing and that the fruit-bearing is certain. No one sees vine blossoms; before the flowers have time to exhibit themselves, they have turned into fruit already. Other blossoms may not consummate in fruit. But when the vine blossoms, it will surely bring forth fruit. This is the position of resurrection. Everything that is dead is over, and the future is full of assurance.

The Lord uses the riches of resurrection to persuade the maiden to come forth. She should not care just for the happiness in her feelings; she should experience the power of resurrection. This is not the time to be passive; this is the time to be aggressive, to come forth, and to show forth His life to the world.

C. The Call of the Cross (2:14)

Verse 14 says, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Formerly, the maiden was only described as having the eyes of a dove. Now she is described as a dove itself. The Lord calls her according to the position she is about to attain. If she hides in the clefts of the rock and in the secret places of the stairs, she will truly live a life in the Spirit. This is why the Lord calls her this way.

Everyone agrees that "the clefts of the rock" signifies the cross. The line of thought here indicates that the seeker has not understood the cross deeply enough. The Lord is speaking to her again in a poetic way. He is saying that the power and riches of resurrection that have been described must be lived out through a pattern. First there is the power of resurrection, then there is the conformation to His death. Philippians 3:10 matches Song of Songs 2:8-14. The cross that is described here is subjective and experiential.

The Lord says, "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice." Our countenance and voice cannot be found anywhere else; they can only be found here. This is the result of the work of conformation by the cross.

This very matter of the cross gives satisfaction to the Lord. In the first section there is consecration, and there is the willingness to follow the Lord and bear the cross. Now He wants to go on to put the seal of the cross upon the seeker. The countenance is what man sees, and the

voice is what man hears. Both the countenance and voice should only be found in the clefts of the rock and the secret places of the stairs. The emphasis here is on oneness (union) with the cross. Now the cross of Christ has become her cross.

A very important truth is revealed here—we should live out the life of the cross in our experience. We should pass through the cross so that the Lord's cross will become our cross. But in order for the cross of Christ to be all that others see and hear from us, there is a need for us to first know the resurrection of Christ. Only that which passes through the cross constitutes resurrection.

The Lord says that everything with the seeker is good, but that it is superficial. She still does not realize the weight of the cross, the extent of consecration, and the meaning of promise. Therefore, she must still go to the clefts of the rock and the secret places of the stairs.

"For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." The voice denotes prayer as well as praise (cf. Mal. 3:16). In the first section, most of the descriptions concern the maiden's desires and pursuit. She desired the King. This is why the King only mentioned her eyes as being the eyes of a dove. Many praises were directed toward the King, but the entire first section reveals how much the King was to the maiden. But we must realize that the King is the center, and she should live for the King. Just as the maiden was the center in the first section, the King is the center in the second section. The maiden is attached to the King; she is there to satisfy the King. She has gained the King already, and she is satisfied. This is not the time for the maiden to desire the King or appreciate him, but the time for the King to appreciate the maiden, to look upon her, and to desire her. Formerly it was Christ for me; now it is me for Christ.

Now the Lord begins to ask for the fruit of the travail of His soul for the satisfaction of His own heart. He is hinting that she should live for Him, and He is calling her to the clefts of the rock and the secret places of the stairs so that He can look at her there.

The Lord calls her to arise, to come out of herself, her feelings, and her introspection. He calls her to live the life of the cross and to express the unspotted new creation produced by the cross through the power of resurrection. This is not the time for her to be in the house of wine; this is the time for her to live for the Lord.

She should arise to change her center. From this point on, everyone who goes on to seek the Lord should live the life of the cross on earth through the power of resurrection for the Lord's enjoyment; they should not be for anything else. In other words, Christianity is no longer a matter of our personal enjoyment, but a matter of Christ enjoying those who are His.

"For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." This does not refer to the natural sweetness and comeliness of her voice and countenance. Rather, it describes the sweetness and comeliness that she has when she is in the clefts of the rock and the secret places of the stairs. This is how she is seen in the high places when she remains in the death of the cross. The rock is cleft, and her hiding in it signifies a union. "The secret

places" indicates complete enclosure; hence, it signifies completion. The clefts of the rock and the secret places together signify a complete union.

The secret places of the stairs should refer to the place of ascension, the place that an ordinary man cannot reach (Col. 3:3-4). Some have translated the word "stairs" as "unreachable places." This again shows that the word refers to ascension, to a place that man cannot reach. Stairs are a high and steep place, a place no ordinary person can reach. Stairs can only be reached through climbing. This is different from the sitting in the heavenlies spoken of in Ephesians 2. Here the emphasis is experience. The Lord's demand is always based on a life of the cross in resurrection. The Lord can say that the maiden's voice is sweet and her countenance is comely because she is fully in union with the cross. This means that she has been dealt with by the cross and is delivered from sin and the natural elements. All the sins and natural elements from Adam have been dealt with, and only that which is in resurrection and the new creation remains. This is the sweet voice and comely countenance in the clefts of the rock and in the secret places of the stairs.

We are daily being dealt with by the cross and, at the same time, we are giving up the Adamic elements. We do not need to strive for the resurrection life; rather, we need to lose the Adamic life. We have everything that issues from the resurrection life already. But at the same time, we still have many things that belong to Adam. Hence, the matter today is not how much we gain, but how much we lose.

The Lord cannot declare immediately that the seeker's voice is sweet and her countenance comely. He can only say this after she has gone into the clefts of the rock and the secret places of the stairs. He will only say such a word when the outward things have been lost. The fact was there already, but He cannot utter these words until she has passed through the cross. Hence, the cross is the place of losing, and only by going through it can we lose. We preach resurrection to sinners because they need to have life, and we preach the cross to believers because they need to suffer loss.

D. The Removal of Hindrances (2:15)

Verse 15 says, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." If this word is spoken by the beloved, it is a continuation of 2:13, which says, "The vines with the tender grape give a good smell." The "us" here is the same as the "our" in 2:12. "Take us the foxes" is in the imperative mood. The foxes always take away the fruit, whereas little foxes break the branches whenever they can. The foxes only want the fruit, and there is still a possibility of fruit-bearing. But the little foxes make it impossible to bear fruit. If we do not pay attention to the matters of the life of the cross before resurrection and the experience of ascension after resurrection, everything will be spoiled by the little foxes.

"The vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance" (RSV). This is only the time for blossoming and the giving forth of fragrance. This means that the state of perfection has not yet been reached. The manifestation of resurrection is just beginning, and the experience of ascension is just beginning. If we are not careful, the foxes can come and spoil them.

What are the little foxes? They are the small manifestations, habits, and introspections of the old life. They may not be big sins. But a little folly can spoil wisdom and honor (Eccl. 10:1). The little foxes are hiding behind the vines. If we are not careful, the vines will be destroyed.

The little foxes are the things that hinder a person from taking the first step in subjective things and that stop the vines from bearing fruit. If the resurrection life is not well established, there is the need to guard against the little foxes.

The maiden cannot deal with the small problems (the little foxes) alone; nor can they be dealt with by the King alone. They have to be dealt with through the cooperation of the maiden and the King.

II. FAILURE AND RECOVERY (2:16—3:5)

Verse 16 says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies." After the maiden has seen the King's attitude, heard his calling, and apprehended the complete union, she answers in this way. She turns back to review her past experience. One thing has satisfied her heart—her beloved is hers. She is already clear that her beloved is hers, and she also knows that she belongs to her beloved, but these are not the things that she is after now. She turns back to consider her past experience. (She is the center. In 6:3 the King is the center, even though she is mentioned as well. By 7:10 only the King is the center, and she has forgotten about herself.)

What she says is not wrong. But she does not answer his question. What a disappointing answer this is! We are not saying whether the answer is good or bad. We are asking whether she has heard what the beloved has said. A person who has freshly consecrated herself does not know what she should be to the Lord, yet she remembers how her beloved is to her. She is still the center, and she does not know that He should be the center. Nevertheless, she still has the feeling that she belongs to the beloved.

"He feedeth [his flock] among the lilies." Although the matter of work is touched here, the emphasis is not on the way the Lord deals with the flock, but on the relationship between the Lord and the lilies. The lilies are those who have a pure conscience. They are planted by the Lord Himself, and they are the Lord's own work. (In the heading to Psalm 45, there are the words, "upon Shoshannim," which mean "set to the lilies.") The Lord is feeding the flock among a group of people. He implies that we are the lilies and that He is feeding us. As long as we have the Lord, we are satisfied. Here the maiden pays attention to what He is to her. However, her words do not answer the Lord's question, and as such, do not satisfy the Lord.

Verse 17 says, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." ("Roe" is "gazelle" in Darby's New Translation and in the margin of the American Standard Version, but the word is "roe" in the King James Version and the text of the American Standard Version. All three versions, have "a young hart." "The mountains of Bether" means the mountain of separation.)

By saying this, she recognizes the existence of the shadows. In a disguised way, she also admits that she cannot satisfy the Lord's heart. She knows that she has not been fully joined to the Lord, and she knows the importance of the calling of the cross, the demand of ascension, and the expression of resurrection. But she is also aware of her own insufficiencies in these matters. Hence, she asks the Lord to wait until the shadows flee away. She is looking for the day to break. She expects that the day will break and the shadows will flee away. She pleads for the return of the beloved. The word "turn," on the one hand, shows her inability to hear the beloved's call and to rise up to follow him, and on the other hand, it shows her desire for the beloved's presence. When we combine the two points, we see that she wants her beloved to be with her. Yet she wants him to be with her on her own terms—within the wall. She is still introspective with her own feelings. She only wants to enjoy his presence in her own feeling; she does not have his mountain-leaping, hill-skipping presence. In other words, she is seeking after pleasure in her feeling, and she is reluctant to participate in any activity in resurrection. Putting it in still another way, she has not yet learned the lesson, and she cannot follow the Lord everywhere and under any circumstances with just faith.

But she receives a great revelation: she is not together with the Lord in every place. Formerly, she secured the Lord's presence within herself and in her own feelings; that was the only place she could find His presence. She thought that this experience of His presence was the highest and the only one, and that there was no other kind of presence. But she has not learned to be with the Lord in her daily duties, her family, and the world in a mountain-leaping, hill-skipping way. She did not know that there could be such an experience, but after this revelation she knows. In the past she only had a certain kind of presence, the presence that could be found within herself; she had not acquired any other kind of presence. She did not have the strength to acquire the omnipresent presence. She did not learn the lesson of treasuring this kind of all-pervading presence. Not only was she too weak to acquire it, but she was too weak to want it. She knew that she could not go, and she did not ask to go. She did not see the suffering of Bether. Hence, she coolly asked the Lord to turn quickly. She knew that she could not go to the place where the Lord was. But she did not know the loss of not going with the Lord. She thought that she could be satisfied with a presence within the wall. She did not realize that there would be a loss by not going with the Lord. Therefore, she asked the Lord to turn as fast as "a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." She did not ask the Lord to give her the strength to bring her out of the mountains of Bether (the hindrance of separation). In her mind, the mountains of Bether could remain.

But she finds to her surprise that the inner feelings of His presence leave when the Lord retreats outwardly. The Lord has not left her, but in her feelings He has indeed left her. The Lord's way of training her is to take away her inner feelings of His presence when she cannot carry this presence to the environment in the world. We do not know how long a period, such as the one described in 2:17, can last. But if we cannot secure Christ's presence in the environment, we cannot secure His presence in our feeling. If we cannot secure Christ's presence by faith, we cannot have His presence by our feeling. Many Christians do not understand why they lose their feelings of the intimate presence of the Lord after they have enjoyed it for a while, and they do not understand why they cannot recover such feelings. When the Lord cannot gain what He wants, you cannot gain what

you want either. If you do not receive His new grace, you will find that your old grace is lost. You may think that you are living in 1:13. Actually, you have drifted into the experience of 3:1. (Both 1:13 and 3:1 use the word "night.") She thinks that she can embrace the Lord between her breasts all night long, just like she did before. Little does she realize that the Lord has left in the night. Because she treasures the Lord's presence in her feelings, she would rather hide behind the walls to keep the feelings. She would rather not go to the world, and she would rather let the Lord take care of His own work and interest. She would allow her union with the Lord to slip and become incomplete, and she would allow Him to act apart from her. The Lord takes away her cherished feelings so that she will lose her feelings of His presence (though not in fact). This is for the purpose of drawing her to seek after the Lord in outward things. This is the first time the maiden is attracted to turn outward.

Verse 3:1 says, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not." The word "night" should be "nights." In 1:13, "night" is singular. "Nights" here refers to a few nights in a row. The beloved seems to have hidden himself. This is something unexpected for her. The purpose of the Lord is to utilize her desire for fellowship in her feeling to attract her so that she would gain what she should gain. Because she has lost the feeling of His presence, she thinks that she has lost the Lord. She does not yet have the knowledge or the experience. Hence, she is foolish; she does not understand the Lord's intention. She seeks for the One whom her soul loves (verses 1 through 3 use this expression three times). She thinks that she is seeking for Him. She does not realize that she is actually seeking for the feeling of His presence. Her seeking is genuine, but she does not realize that the object which she seeks and fails to find is not the real thing.

Verse 2 says, "I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not." The rising up in Luke 15 is toward the Father, whereas the rising up here is toward the Son. The seeking in Song of Songs 3:1 is a seeking on the bed. This means that she has not left her own position. Her position is still wrong.

The first step toward a knowledge of the Lord is a knowledge of the cross. We have not covered this aspect in this book yet. After taking the first step in knowing Him, we have Christ in our heart, which is the fellowship in our feeling, the experience of the chambers and the house of wine. Then we have to go on to know a Christ who is not bound by the environment. The maiden has taken both the first and the second step, but she has not taken the third step. Her bed, the place where she rests, is the problem. The Lord disturbs her rest. Those who have not passed through the experience of "our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir" need to be led by the Lord to experience this rest. But those who have had this experience should be led further to leap upon the mountains and skip upon the hills with the Lord. The Lord calls the maiden out of the bed that she rests in, and He makes it clear to her that His presence is no longer there.

Now she determines to rise up. She realizes that she is not advancing in her faith and that her feeling is gone. The meaning of rising up is to no longer lie on the bed and rest.

The Lord teaches her to transcend over a rest that depends on time and place. Previously, she treasured a rest that depended on time and place above everything else. But after the Lord has taken her a step further, she realizes that a rest that depends on time and place is not complete. Therefore, she wants to rise up and move away from this rest, and learn to experience the rest that is satisfied in every kind of circumstance.

After she arises, she wants to "go about the city." (Formerly, this city referred to Jerusalem. Now it refers to the heavenly Jerusalem and to everything that is heavenly.) She seeks Christ among all the heavenly things, matters, and people. Perhaps she has spent a considerable time studying many doctrines in the Bible. Perhaps she has read many books by others and has participated in many meetings with spiritual persons. Perhaps she has done all these, and perhaps she has even sought "in the streets, and in the broad ways." The "streets" are the ordinary roads, whereas "the broad ways" are the wide roads. These are the places where the citizens pass, the places of communication. These are the means where they receive grace. The Lord is "the way." In other words, these are the usual means by which God's people receive fellowship and grace. She has tried them all. These may include confession, repentance, prayer, fasting, meeting, and fellowship between the saints. They may even include faith and trust in Him. But she cannot find the Lord in these places. (In searching for sinners, we have to go to the "streets and lanes" as in Luke 14:21. But in the New Jerusalem, there are only streets. Before God there are no small lanes. The world always takes small lanes, but spiritually, this cannot be done.)

When the Lord purposely goes away and takes away man's feeling of His presence, it is difficult to recover it through man's ways of seeking. By now the maiden has learned at least one lesson: the Lord is not in the place of the bed. If she cannot find Him within, she has to look for Him without. If it is true that prayer is not for prayer, that Bible reading is not for Bible reading, and that a quiet time is not for a quiet time but for His presence, then to a certain point, prayer, Bible reading, and quiet time have to be relinquished before we can find His presence.

The maiden begins to leave her bed and to communicate with God's other children. She learns to take God's way. She no longer has coverings, and she does not care for her "face" any longer. She no longer tries to cover her inner emptiness with outward works. She learns to mingle herself with God's other children and to solve her spiritual problems in this way. Formerly, the only way to solve her spiritual problems was with the bed. Now she can walk through the city and search in the streets and the broad places. Although she has not met the Lord, He is inside the city. Although she has not met the Lord along the paths she travels, these journeys are indispensable for her. Soon she will meet the Lord; it is only a matter of time.

Verse 3 says, "The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" The words "go about" can be translated as "parade." These watchmen are charged by God to watch over souls (Heb. 13:17). They go about the city; they are the ones who are familiar with spiritual things. Perhaps in the past, these ones rendered much help to the maiden. Although the maiden has not sought them, their

duty puts them in a place where they see the maiden. The maiden thinks that perhaps these ones can tell her where her beloved is.

But the most that the watchmen can do is to show the way or the teachings. In order to meet the Lord, you have to go to the Lord yourself. No watchman can do this for you. Finding the watchman is not the same as finding the Lord. Every seeking heart must deal directly with the Lord and be dealt with directly by the Lord. Although the watchmen are useful, they sometimes turn out to be useless. When the Lord is dealing with you, you will not receive anything if you depend too much on others. You have to see that you have to leave the watchmen in order to find the way to the Beloved. You may experience the same thing as this maiden, who meets her beloved as soon as she leaves him.

Going about the city is necessary. But we cannot find the Lord this way. The broad places are necessary, but they will not lead us to the Lord. The Lord wants her to take only one way, which the watchmen cannot help her to find.

Verse 4 says, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." Now she finds the beloved. What does this mean? It does not mean that going about the city is absolutely justified, and it does not mean that the streets and the broad places are the right places to go. Nor does it mean that she was perfected by confessing her failures before the watchmen. There are still many lessons for her to learn. She is not only in the Lord's heart; she is also in the Lord's hand. The fact that she is able to find the Lord again is not a sign that she has been perfected. It merely means that the Lord realizes that she can only take so much testing. Although she is still far from perfection, her desperation for the Lord causes Him to gladly reveal Himself to her. He brings this period of testing to a conclusion and waits before taking her on further in the way ahead. The seeking of a person who is not in complete union with the Lord is mixed and imperfect. But the Lord does not have the time to deal with this mixture now. In the initial period of experience, the Lord is willing to allow those who seek to find, even though their seeking may not be spiritual. This experience is like that which is described in Ezekiel 47:3-5, where one is measured and brought through the water. The Lord has measured her, and He is now taking her through. This portion of the journey has been under the Lord's measuring.

"I held him, and would not let him go." She thinks that she has regained what she lost. She may think that she lost Him because she did not hold tight enough. Therefore, she holds Him tight now. Once she was not alert enough in her feelings, and she allowed Him to slip away. Now she has to be watchful to guard Him. Although she realizes that she needs to come out before she can be with the Lord, her heart's desire is still for His presence in her feelings. Part of the lesson of coming out has been learned, but the lesson of faith has not yet been learned. She has indeed risen, but she has not yet gone away with Him. She has not been brought to the point where she allows the Lord to come and go as He pleases. She does not realize that in a life of faith, it is impossible to retain the feeling of the Lord's presence forever. She still holds on to this experience. She has not realized that the feeling of His presence should be allowed to come and go. When He is pleased to give us the feeling of His presence, we can have it. But when He is not pleased to give us this feeling, we should gladly relinquish it, holding on to Him and on to all

that He is by faith. But the maiden does not know this yet. She still thinks that the best experience is the feeling of His presence. She is still not aware of (even though she may have heard of it) a way and a life of faith. Therefore, she holds Him tight and will not let Him go. Little does she realize that holding with the flesh will only result in more loss. A spiritual pursuit allows the Lord to have the full freedom in everything, whereas a soulish pursuit plans everything for oneself, even though he is seeking the Lord's presence.

However, the Lord deals with man according to his measure. Although there are still many lessons to learn and many things to know, the Lord is willing to be seen by the maiden, to be held by her, and to be taken away by her. In the present stage of dealing, she has passed through sufficient trials; her pursuit is sufficient. Since she has not yet learned to separate the soul from the spirit, the Lord does not put any further burden on her.

"Until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." Although there is a mixture of the self, the Lord is willing to humble Himself and allow her to enjoy His presence once more. The Lord enters her mother's house and the inner chamber of the one who conceived her. If "my mother's house" refers to the principle of grace, then "the chamber of her that conceived me" must refer to the love of God. God deals with her according to the principle of grace and in His love. (When we were sinners, we were conceived in lusts and born in sin. The maiden is conceived in love and born in grace.) She now seeks after the Lord's presence according to His grace and love. Poetically speaking, she is now bringing the Lord to an intimate place. She is a maiden, and her mother's house and the chamber of the one who conceived her must be a most excellent place.

This concludes another section. She has a good enjoyment of the Lord's presence. But this is not perfection yet.

The Lord is still being pursued; He is still the passive One. The maiden has not learned how to allow the Lord to have His freedom. But she has learned many lessons. She remains here for a period of time (perhaps a few months). A person finds the holding strength the strongest when he regains the Lord after losing Him for a while.

Verse 5 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." The Lord is giving a charge again. Since she has suffered great testing, the Lord gives her a period of rest. He is saying, "This person is under My dealing. There is no need for others to help her or stir her up." The lesson she learns here is real, and a period of real progress follows. From what follows, we can see that she has indeed experienced the power of resurrection, the riches of resurrection, and the life of the cross (though not in an absolute way). She has learned these three lessons well. Therefore, the Lord praises her with the words that follow.