

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**THE GROANING OF THE FLESH**  
**(8:1-14)**  
**I. THE GROANING FOR DELIVERANCE**  
**FROM THE FLESH**

The deeper a believer is in union with the Lord and the more he comes up to the standard of the maiden, the more he will be aware of his outward man and the shell of his flesh. It is true that the inward man is renewed day by day, but the outer man is also decaying day by day. Although the Holy Spirit gives life to the mortal body, the body itself is still destined to die. Although God's power is made perfect in our weakness, the body is still a thorn to us. Hence, the more a believer advances, and the more spiritual and heavenly he becomes, the more he will be aware of the limitation of the flesh in spite of his present perfection. He will feel that even though he has the firstfruits of the Spirit, there will be the inevitable groanings within in addition to the groanings of the whole creation for the redemption of the body. When we live by the flesh, we do not feel the need for the redemption of our body. When our union with the Lord has become very nearly perfect, we sense the difference between our inward state and our outward body. Although the condition of the body does not constitute a hindrance, at the very least it constitutes a weakness. At this time the redemption of the body becomes a necessary grace.

Song of Songs 8:1 says, "O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised." The maiden is saying to the Lord, in effect, "I wish I could become more intimately related to You than I am today. I wish that You were my brother in the flesh, and that my relationship with You before God could be manifested immediately before men. When this happens, I will not be despised when I confess You before men and when I acknowledge my love before others. Since I am still in the world, I still feel weakness in me, and I cannot treat You as my heart wishes to treat You. In the beginning I was after Your kisses; I was after You and Your expression of love to me. Now I desire to kiss You, to express my love to You, and to satisfy You. But there is a barrier, the barrier of the flesh. You have not revealed Yourself as my brother yet. Therefore, while I remain in the world, I cannot help but think that I have not served You as I should have served."

Verse 2 says, "I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." She continues to say, "When that day comes, it will be as if I am leading You into the heavenly Jerusalem. I will forever be taught of grace. All my fruits today are for the making of the sweet wine of that day, which will serve as Your eternal joy. None of the spiritual fruits I have received from You will be for myself. On that day all the pomegranates will be turned into spiced wine for Your satisfaction. I will give everything I have to You, and everything I have will be for Your enjoyment."

Verse 3 says, "His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me." She continues to say, "On that day, His left hand will be under my head, and He will lift up my face to behold Him. His right hand will embrace me, and He will see me face to face within His bosom. I am looking forward to this day. O that it would come quickly!"

Verse 4 says, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until she please." "O daughters of Jerusalem, she is now living in the hope of rapture; she is in His hand. Her feeling at the moment is proper. There is no need to arouse her. Do not interfere by the hand of flesh, until she wakes up in the countenance of His face."

## **II. BEFORE THE RAPTURE (8:5-14)**

Verse 5 says, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee." This book speaks of the maiden coming up from the wilderness two times. The first coming up from the wilderness in 3:6 refers to her forsaking of a wandering life. There she began her absolute union with the Lord in His death, His life, and all His grace. Since then she steadily advanced, until she left the wilderness completely. Although in her latter experience she stopped once or twice, we dare not say that these stops were necessary, but surely we can say that they were excusable. Once we leave the wandering life, we leave it for good. Why then does the Lord speak about her coming up from the wilderness a second time, as if she is still in the wilderness?

We must pay attention to what the wilderness refers to. The wilderness for us is not just a wandering life, but the world itself. Not only is there a wilderness in the spiritual realm; there is also a wilderness in the fleshly realm. We must not only be delivered spiritually from the wilderness of wandering, but we must be delivered from this earthly wilderness as well. When the Lord reigns within us through the Holy Spirit, we begin to leave behind a fluctuating life. When we hear the call for the rapture, we will be delivered from the worldly environment. The cross of Christ delivers us from the spiritual wilderness, and the coming of Christ delivers us from the earthly wilderness. This is why there is a second coming up from the wilderness. This is being delivered from this earth.

The Holy Spirit once again asks a question through the mouth of a third party. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?" It seems as if He sees a maiden coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved; the closer she gets, the clearer her identity becomes.

Here we see that the rapture that delivers us from the wilderness does not happen suddenly, but is a result of a step-by-step walk with the Lord. The rapture is the last step of our walk with the Lord. All that men see will be the instant change from earth to heaven. But this is merely the last step of the rapture. The beginning of the rapture does not happen then. When a believer is attracted by heaven and walking away from the world step by step, he becomes further and further away from the world, and there will

be a clearer and clearer separation between him and the world. When the process is complete, he will find himself waking up before the face of the Lord. This is the way that Enoch was raptured. We must never be misled to think that the rapture is something that will happen suddenly or something that will instantly change our spiritual condition.

This is the time to prepare ourselves for the rapture. By leaning upon our Beloved, we constantly leave the world behind and come up again and again until the Lord comes to take us away.

“Leaning upon her beloved.” She seems to be powerless and unable to walk. “Leaning upon her beloved.” She makes herself a burden for her beloved to carry. “Leaning upon her beloved.” It is as if the hollow of her thigh has been touched. “Leaning upon her beloved.” She seems to find herself pressed beyond measure, and this seems to last until the wilderness journey is over. Only the Lord can prepare us for the rapture. A trusting life is indispensable. We should trust in Him helplessly until the Holy Spirit exclaims, “Who is this that cometh...leaning upon her beloved?”

The Lord answers and says that she is none other than the once-filthy sinner, who was seen by grace, called by grace, and saved by grace. Her mother is God’s grace. The grace of God does not refer just to God’s forbearance. His forbearance is only a small part of His grace. God’s grace also includes His plan and selection before the foundation of the world and His Son’s redemption and the work of the Holy Spirit in time. All these are God’s grace according to the Bible. When God’s grace seeks and finds a chosen sinner, it puts him under the shadow of Christ. There he is fed with life, and there he is brought forth. When he wakes up, he finds himself in the love of Christ.

The “apple” tree is the same bergamot orange in 2:3; it refers to Christ, who is full of affection. Who is this maiden? She is none other than a sinner saved by grace. Thank God that when she first opened her eyes to behold the world, the first thing she saw was the affectionate Christ. The first fact she discovered was that she was under the shadow of such an affectionate Christ. This was her origin. How fitting it is for her to remember this at the time of her spiritual maturity!

Verse 6 says, “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.” When she recalls her original condition, she cannot help but be filled with humility. She cannot help but consider her emptiness, the vanity of her experience, the undependability of her mind, and the futility of her pursuit. Her only hope is the Lord. She realizes that whether she can endure to the end does not depend on her own endurance, but on the Lord’s preservation. No spiritual perfection can sustain a person until the Lord’s return. Everything depends on God and His preserving power. When she realizes this, she cannot help but exclaim, “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm.” The heart is the place of love, while the arm is the place of strength. “Set me as permanently as a seal upon Your heart, and as indelibly as a seal upon Your arm. Just as the priests bore the Israelites upon their breasts and their shoulders, remember me constantly in Your heart and sustain me with Your arm. I

know that I am weak and empty, and I am conscious of my powerlessness. Lord, I am a helpless person. If I try to preserve myself until Your coming, it will only bring shame to Your name and loss to myself. All my hopes are in Your love and power. I loved You before. But I know the undependability of that love. Now I look only to the love You have toward me. I held You once, and it seemed to be a powerful grip. But now I realize that even my strongest grip is just weakness. My trust is not in my holding power, but in Your holding power. I dare not speak of my love to You any longer. I dare not speak of my grasping of You any longer. From this point on, everything depends on Your strength and Your love.

“Your love is as strong as death. Who can shake death? No sighing of parents, no tears of wives, and no sorrow of friends can bring back a man from death. Death holds its captives and keeps them firmly, unrelentingly, and unshakably in its hand. If You love me, I will not be shaken, because Your love cannot possibly be weaker than death.

“If You love me, Your jealousy will follow. Your jealousy will be as cruel as Sheol. You will surely rebuke and surely seek for perfection. You will not allow anything to share my heart. Even if You owned a major part of me, You would not be satisfied. Your eyes cannot stand to see those who are Yours being defiled by the world or usurped by other loves. You are jealous; from the beginning of time You have been a jealous God (Exo. 20:5). Have not Your apostles told us about the jealousy of God (2 Cor. 11:2)? If You are jealous, who can withstand Your jealousy? What can withstand Your jealousy? You will destroy all Your enemies. You will remove all hindrances until You become the unique Lord, the God of all, and the unchallenged King. In this way, I will be protected, and my chastity will be preserved until I see Your face.”

Jealousy is as cruel as Sheol. What can be crueler than Sheol? A person may be the most lovable one, the most adorable one, or the most precious one, but when Sheol comes to claim a sinner, it will not care if such a one is lovable or adorable. No tears, sorrow, or pleading can move its heart. It does not know mercy and compassion. It has no sympathy or feeling. It is cruel. “Since I have consecrated myself to You as a chaste virgin, if You see anything in me that stirs up Your jealousy, You will surely deal with it at all cost until You completely prevail. There may be loving friends, close relatives, or dear lovers begging, pleading, and weeping, but You do not care for any of these things; You only care for Your own feeling. But this is the only way that I will be preserved.” “The coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.” Jehovah is a fire (Heb. 12:29). His love and jealousy are also like fire which burns up everything that can be burned. Everything that is not eternal, that can pass away, that is of the world, and that is of man will be burned away.

Verse 7 says, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” “Many waters” signify trials that believers go through. “Floods” signify persecutions from the enemy. His love and the fire of His love will not be quenched by trials. His love and the fire of His love cannot be drowned by persecutions. If He loves us, no trial or persecution can do anything to us.

This love cannot be bought with money. In other words, it is irreplaceable. We cannot replace this love with the tongues of men and angels. We cannot replace this love with the gift of prophecy, the knowledge of mysteries, all knowledge, or all faith. Even if we doled out all our possessions to feed others and delivered up our body so that we might boast, we would still be despised. These things are merely part of the treasures of a man's house. Trying to exchange love for these things will result in being despised. Since this is the case, we will not earn His love with more work, busy times, or toiling services. We can only offer ourselves to Him so that we will become the object of His love.

Verse 8 says, "We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?" A person who lives in the Lord's love cannot forget that there are others who should have the Lord's love also. Before she goes away to see the Lord, she remembers those who are less mature. She speaks of her little sister, who has life, but whose faith and love have not grown to the point where she can develop an affection for the Lord. The maiden's union with the Lord is already complete. Therefore, she can freely express all of her feelings before the Lord.

"What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?" The little sister does not yet know what a life of love is all about. But when the eternal Lover leads her into a fellowship of love through the Holy Spirit, what will we do with her? As far as her life is concerned, she is a little sister. As far as her life of love is concerned, her two breasts have not developed. We are concerned for this group of people and are burdened to care for them. The Lord will not be satisfied with their condition. A marriage proposal is indispensable in a believer's life. Although every believer has full liberty to accept or reject, the Lord's demand for love is the same. How should we help this little sister of ours?

The maiden brings up those whom she has always cared for and who are younger than she is; she brings them up before the Lord to discuss them with Him. Because she is living so much in the Lord's will, she can say, "We have...." She knows that her concern is the Lord's concern. Therefore, she says, "We." She knows that what she wants is also what the Lord wants. Therefore, she says, "We." The union is complete; there is no more separation. Hence, prayers are no longer requests, but a speaking forth of God's will.

Verse 9 says, "If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar." "If she be a wall." If there is anything that is of God, which causes her to build a separation between herself and that which is not of God, like a wall, then "we will build upon her a palace of silver." We will build upon her everything that is high and noble that comes from redemption. If she has established a life of separation through the Holy Spirit, we will build upon her the fruit of redemption. If she is a door, others will enter into God's knowledge through her. "We will inclose her with boards of cedar." We will add Christ's heavenly humanity to her. (Wood signifies humanity, whereas cedar is tall. Hence cedar wood signifies Christ's heavenly humanity, His glorified humanity, and His heavenly human life.) She no longer does the things that she wants to do; she does them together with the Lord. Although the words are out of her mouth, they represent the Lord's mind.

Verse 10 says, “I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favor.” “I am a wall.” I am already a separated person; the Lord has separated me from everything unclean, common, and ordinary. “My breasts like towers.” My faith and love are based on my separation from the world. The Lord has established me, and my two breasts are no longer undeveloped; they are like towers. I have come to the point where I am a person who has obtained peace in His eyes (“found favor” can be translated “found peace”). This means that I can be at rest. Hence, a life of peace is based on a life of separation, which is based on the development of faith and love. She gives a short testimony and shows that there is no thought of self-contentment. She can say that she is a wall, and she can say that her two breasts are towers, but in the Lord’s eyes, she considers herself as one who has obtained peace.

Verse 11 says, “Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.” Before the believers are raptured, the Holy Spirit wants them to pay attention to one thing—the reward of the work. Solomon has his vineyards; they are his fields, and he leases them out to the keepers. The Lord’s work is not ours; our position is forever that of a steward. We are merely keeping watch over His business. When He comes, what He entrusted to us will return to Him.

“Baalhamon” means “the lord of all.” This shows us that the Lord, like Solomon, is the lord of everything; He is also our Lord. Solomon’s charge was that the keepers would have the fruits; but for the fruits that they harvested, they would have to give Solomon a thousand pieces of silver. The Lord will also give us the fruit of what we keep, tend, and raise for Him today; that will be our reward. Nothing that we do for the Lord is in vain. Even a cup of water that we give away will be rewarded.

“Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.” Solomon will have his share as well. The one thousand pieces of silver are the account that we have to give to the Lord. This is different from what is recorded in Luke 19 and Matthew 25. There we see a difference based on our gifts. Here the one thousand pieces of silver are what each keeper should give to the Lord. When we stand before the judgment seat, the Lord has a minimum requirement for each one of us. This requirement is the one thousand pieces of silver here.

Verse 12 says, “My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.” The maiden now separates herself from the other keepers. She is not an ordinary keeper of the vineyards of Solomon. Solomon gave her a vineyard once; therefore, she has her own vineyard. This vineyard is now “before me,” which means that the vineyard is hers (Gen. 13:9) and that it is under her direction. According to righteousness, the keepers should pay Solomon a thousand pieces of silver. According to love, should she do less than what the law requires? Of course not! She should give Solomon a thousand pieces of silver. Here we see two kinds of services. Some serve according to the law, whereas others serve according to love. Some serve out of fear, whereas others serve out of gratitude. Some serve as a duty, whereas others serve as a joy. Although she stands on a higher ground, and although she has a love relationship with the Lord and is different from others who

serve Him out of a sense of duty, nevertheless, she does not give less than what the Lord's duty requires.

Not only does Solomon receive something; those who keep watch over the fruits also receive something. She renders rightful glory and praise to all those helping her in the work. She does not take over their rightful portion. May God's children not usurp the glory of their co-workers.

When the Lord rewards His workers, she will be included among those keeping the fruits; she will receive the two hundred pieces of silver. According to righteousness, she should only receive the fruits and not the silver (S.S. 8:11). However, all those who serve the Lord in love will find that when they do not take the Lord's work as a commercial enterprise, the Lord will not reward them on a commercial basis. In addition to receiving her fruits, the Lord bestows glory on her. The judgment seat should be something along the line of Matthew. However, the emphasis here is not on responsibility but on love. The question of work and reward should not have been brought up. However, the Holy Spirit mentions it from the standpoint of love, not from the standpoint of responsibility. It is mentioned because it matches the principle of the whole book.

Verse 13 says, "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it." "Thou" refers to the Lord. "The gardens" are plural in number. He is not only dwelling in the garden of the maiden (6:2) but dwelling in many other gardens as well. He is the Lord who dwells in the hearts of men. He is not only dwelling in the heart of one who follows Him absolutely, but He is dwelling in the hearts of all those whom He delights in. The maiden addresses Him according to this relationship. She says to Him, "The companions hearken to thy voice." The word "hearken" means that everyone is listening. All those who are seeking the Lord together with her adopt the same attitude. They have been dealt with, and they know the futility of speaking and the profit of hearkening. They know that they have to be slow to speak in order to be quick to hear. Both she and they are no longer as talkative as they once were; they no longer babble about their condition before the Lord as soon as they acquire some experience. That conduct is gone. They no longer insist on speaking like others do, and they no longer speak for the sake of speaking. Those who cannot stop talking about trivial things still have the earthly life reigning within them. But these are listening; they adopt the attitude of a hearer. They know that their lives depend on the Lord's words and their work depends on the Lord's commands. They will only listen, because they cannot and will not move by themselves any longer. Without the Lord's words, they will not have any revelation, light, or knowledge. The life of the believers hinges totally upon the Lord's speaking.

"O Lord, while we are waiting to hearken, make us hear. If those who seek find, and if those who knock have the door opened to them, make us hear, and make us able to hear. If Jehovah will not speak to us, we will be like those who are dead. What use is there in hearing something if it is not heard in a real way? Therefore, please allow us to hear Your voice, because only this can guide us until Your return." She has learned her lessons by now; therefore, she offers up such a profound prayer toward the end.

Verse 14 says, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." These words are the same as in 2:17. It is the same prayer, but the things that are referred to are not the same in both cases. This book mentions the wilderness two times, and in the same way, it mentions the Lord's coming as "a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices" two times. The first time on the mountains refers to His fellowship with the believers; it shows His longing for an absolute fellowship with the believers. But then the shadows had not fled and the day had not yet broken, that is, the Lord had not yet come. The emphasis was fellowship. Therefore, we saw Him upon the mountains of Bethel; He was clearing away everything that was causing "separation." But the second refers to the Lord's second coming. This coming is in the future, and though it may be very near, no one knows when it will be. Unlike the case in chapter two, it does not have a time limit. The matter is not fellowship; therefore, this verse does not speak of the mountains of Bethel, but of the mountains of spices. It describes the condition of the Lord's coming and His kingdom. At that time, it will be a marvelous world, one like the mountains of spices.

Then the maiden's experience will be like a drop of water that has disappeared into the ocean; there will no more room for advancement, though the tide can always go deeper. All that is left in the world is just her body. Everything else has gone to another world. Therefore, she cannot help but cry, "Make haste, my beloved." "Come as quickly as the roe or a young hart. Just as a roe or a young hart appears on the mountains of spices, may You come in Your kingdom." Although the love is perfect, something is still lacking. When He comes, faith will be turned to facts, and praise will replace prayer. Love will consummate in a shadowless perfection, and we will serve Him in the sinless domain. What a day that will be! Lord Jesus, come quickly!