



# Love's Suppressing Restraint

Sweet Nothings Are Often Just That

| Song 6:4-13

## Introduction

The Shulamite had been telling the worldly women of Solomon's harem about her shepherd and had even been able to spark some kind of an interest. Now came the fiercest time of testing found anywhere in her experiences with the king.

It would seem Solomon had been moved to jealousy by the hold the shepherd had upon the heart of the woman he coveted. Perhaps the king noticed a change among his wives and their attitude toward the unseen shepherd?

He had to know that any opportunity he might have of making headway was slipping away. Without the fanfare and the public display that usually accompanied him, the king appeared suddenly and aggressively pursued the Shulamite. He began with words of *flattery* (6:4-7:9), and when he could not succeed in that manner, he tried *firmness* (7:10-8:4).

Note: In this section of *Song of Solomon*, some of the romantic language is repeated. This might lead us to believe the shepherd is actually speaking. In this story, Solomon is a type of the devil: he does not use originality in his approach, he copies God (Isaiah 14:14). In fact, satan does not hesitate to quote scripture when it suits his needs (Genesis 3:1-5; Luke 4:9-11), although he does not quote it accurately. Likewise, when read carefully, there is a hint of intimidation to be found in the words Solomon used. In the same manner, the devil desires to control the church, but is prevented from doing so.

## Solomon's Flatteries Resound 6:4-10

The Shulamite was not taken by surprise at what Solomon had to say. Even so, the king presented an air of assurance and confidence, and why not? Had not the whole world run after him? Why not this simple country girl? In his flatteries, he took a two-fold approach: *You are fair* and *You are first*.

**You Are First 6:4-7** Some things Solomon said in his appeal were within the bounds of propriety and were certainly true. In fact, they were the kinds of things the shepherd might have said about his bride-to-be. Again, that should not surprise us. The tempter is rarely original. His most clever appeals are gross imitations of the realities offered by Christ.

**That which is imperial** (=befitting a king...6:4). Everything about this country girl struck Solomon as royalty. She was an uneducated vineyard worker with none of the airs of the harem beauties. Yet, this Shulamite outshone them all with her stately grace, simplicity, and uncompromising dignity.

He compared her to **Tirzah**. Located in a beautiful part of the country, the place later became the royal residence of the kings of Israel after the division of the kingdom (until Omri built Samaria). The name means *delightful* and defined the natural beauty of the young girl.

The king also compared her to **Jerusalem**, the Holy City. So not only was she *delightful* in her beauty, but she was *divine*, as well. In comparing the Shulamite to Jerusalem, he was all but telling her she deserved to be worshiped.

Keep in mind, Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem and it was the center of worship for all the Jewish people. It was the city of The Great King (Psalm 48:2). How could any human compare?

Additionally, the king compared her beauty to a well-equipped and fierce (*terrible*) **army**, its battle flags flying high. Picture the scene: uniformed troops marching in steps that shake the earth. Trumpets are blown and weapons glisten in the sunlight. Above it all are the banners, the identifying flag for which the army fights. In this, the Shulamite was devastating in her beauty.

In other words, Solomon told the Shulamite she had vanquished him, devastated him, conquered him, and marched all over him (ugh!).

It should be apparent to the reader that Solomon is putting much effort into winning the heart of this beautiful girl. He is a handsome and wealthy king, who could have any woman he wanted. So why is he trying so hard to win this one girl? As a Hebrew king, he was fully aware he answered to Almighty God for his actions. As vile, and yet sociably accepted, as some things were, there was one line he was not willing to cross.

In much the same way, satan knows he does not stand a chance against the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus said the gates of Hell would not prevail against her (Matthew 16:18). The devil cannot touch the church or force its membership to do anything. He can, however, tempt her with everything in his arsenal. So often, flattery does the trick.

**That which is impossible** (6:5a). It is shocking for the king of Israel to admit this fact. All she had to do was to look at him with her clear, pure, fearless eyes and he was utterly vanquished.

Let her look! The longer she gazed, the more disgusted she would get. He could not stand her gaze when she looked at him like that. Others fawned over the king and his courtly trappings, but she could see through to the shallowness of his soul. She saw the king he would become in *Ecclesiastes*.

In the Garden of Eden, Eve never looked upon the serpent that way. In fact, the snake was considered more subtle than all the created beasts (Genesis 3:1). Surrounded as she was by sinless beauty, all the devil had to do was shine a little brighter. Eve never stood a chance against that deception. But the Shulamite? She knew better.

If only the church would remember this. If only we would take a good look at the seducer of our souls. Let us get beyond those high-sounding titles of his: *star of the morning, prince of the power of the air, god of this world*. Instead, look at him calmly and knowingly. He is *the old serpent, the devil, satan, the deceiver, the murderer, the liar, the lawless one, the spirit who works in the children of disobedience*.

Take a good look at him with an eye trained in the truth of God's Word. He cannot abide that gaze.

**That which is impeccable** (6:5-7). Solomon gazed upon the Shulamite and enumerated those things that stood out as near-perfect. In doing so, he borrowed the love-language of the shepherd (*cf* 4:2-3). Hair like a flock of goats...pomegranate temples.

But wait, how did Solomon know about this? No doubt, the Daughters of Jerusalem had been reporting back to the king. They must have told him how the young girl rambled on, talking about this unseen man and his poetic ways. Solomon must have reasoned that if it was poetry she desired, he would give it to her.

But didn't Solomon compose songs and poetry himself (1 Kings 4:32)? Yes, but in a time of desperation, he could not trust his artistic manners to sway the Shulamite. He would fall back on that which was tried and true.

Note: In this passage, we get a glimpse of what appealed to Solomon. The Shulamite was impeccable in her *glory*, her *gladness*, and in her *goodness*.

her glory = her hair

her gladness = her smile

her goodness = her blush

It is the same with the church in this world. Her glory is displayed so as to bring honor to her Head. The church derives her joy and gladness from sources other than the world. Her goodness is of such caliber it cannot be found among the unregenerate sons of men.

'You are fair,' the king proclaimed. How he longed to bend her to his will and make her one of his possessions. She saw past his flattery, and he was forced to try another approach.

Of course, satan desires to reduce the status of the church, to make her just another religious organization. The world, at times, pays lip service to the church. After all, the church has admirable qualities. But for all those exceptions, the world rejoices most when the church fails.

**You Are First 6:8-10** With something of a leer, Solomon told the Shulamite he had plenty of women. *But you*, he says in effect, *can be the first*. There were sixty queens, eighty concubines, and an innumerable number of other young girls waiting in the wings...but the Shulamite would be given preference over all of them. This would have been a flattering offer to many in the kingdom, but for the Shulamite, it held no sway. After all, she was already first in the heart of her beloved shepherd. What sort of pure woman would want to preside over a harem?

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For the devil, the church would make a great addition to the collection of those who yield to his contaminated embrace and give themselves carelessly to his will. He has religions without number...some that are highly exalted by the world's standards. Additionally, there are scores who deny the existence of God and thus fall blindly into satan's schemes. In **Revelation 17:3-17**, we find he has a **false bride...a religious system** used to lead millions into eternity without Christ.

And for all this, the old serpent still desires to have the Church as his possession. She is the pure and holy bride of Christ.

She indeed will be first...first in the universe, sharing the splendor and magnificence of her Lord. She is already seated with Him spiritually in heavenly places (**Ephesians 2:6**), far above principalities and thrones (**Ephesians 3:10** and **Colossians 1:16-18**).

In the coming age, she will most visibly be first throughout all of God's vast empire. There is no reason to settle for cheap imitations and temptations in this life. Not from the one who will ultimately lose and be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Having numbered his conquests (more than 140 women), Solomon went on to contrast the Shulamite (**verse 9a**). Again, we recognize the king's deliberate use of the shepherd's own words. When she was recounting her dream to the court women, the Shulamite had reported to them what her beloved had said when he stood at the unopened door (**5:2**).

Solomon picked up the same language in the vain hope that somehow the use of these precious words would endear him to her.

Satan never gives up and he is never more nauseating to the soul who loves the Shepherd than when he steals the words of scripture to lure men and women into his snares. How often have Christians been challenged by unbelievers who have a casual knowledge of the Bible? They know just enough to be dangerous.

Also, the young, simple girl was first in the confession of others (6:9b). It would appear even the court women forgot their jealousy in their admiration of the inherent beauty of this shepherd girl. At least, they pretended to do so in the presence of their king. Whereas theirs was the beauty of cosmetics and refined clothing, her beauty glowed from within.

Compare this part of the story with the religions of the world under satan's command. There is beauty to be seen in the rituals of religion. Certainly, the world is drawn to those aspects:

- the beautiful architecture of Islam
- the enlightened mind of the Buddhist
- the tolerance and acceptance of all faiths in the Baha'i cult

A world filled with empty and shallow people are willing to overlook the nonsense underlying these organizations, if only to find acceptance in a religion.

In 6:4-10, we watched as Solomon told the Shulamite she was fair and first. He restrained himself and did not touch her or tamper with her. From somewhere, a line was drawn across which he dared not go. The king was not finished, however, and his flatteries would reveal more of his hidden character.

## *Solomon's Flatteries Rebuffed* **6:11-13**

The Shulamite rejected Solomon's suggestions instantly and categorically. She was not interested. That is the best way to deal with temptation. When we toy with it and give it a moment's thought, we lose (**Ephesians 4:27; James 4:7**).

**The Shulamite's Explanation verses 11-12** In the first part of her response, the young girl said, in effect: *I was attending my own business, going about my duties of inspecting the orchards and the vineyards. Suddenly, I found myself surrounded.* She had not been leaning over the garden gate, drawing attention to herself. She was not looking for trouble or distraction.

Of course, the devil works in just such a manner. Going through our day, minding our own business, the wicked one knows how to distract our attention. It only takes a moment. When we take up the temptation and play with it we always get in deeper. As someone has said:

*Sow a thought and reap an action;*

*Sow an action and reap a habit;*

*Sow a habit and reap a character;*

*Sow a character and reap an eternal destiny.*

In other words, we make friends with the wrong crowd or show an interest in some worldly pleasure, and before we know it we have become involved. It is no simple task to 'flee youthful lusts' (**2 Timothy 2:22**). As Christians, we are to avoid any compromising situation (**2 Corinthians 2:11**).

Note: The phrase 'the chariots of Amminadib' is difficult to understand. *Amminadib* literally means 'my generous people' and is closely related to the proper name Amminadab. Thus, it could be a reference to the entourage of Solomon's palace. It would seem that by chance in his travels about the kingdom, the king first glimpsed this object of his desire. Notice the pronoun *we* in **verse 13**, further indicating a group of people rather than just an individual.

**The Seducer's Exclamation verse 13a** Solomon was rejected as the young girl turned her back on him and walked away. Solomon had sought to impress this simple, naïve country girl with his gaudy possessions and sly charm. Yet, she was not impressed at all! What a testimony to believers in the modern world. Would that we might turn our backs on satan and refuse to give his enticements further fuel in our lives (**Mark 8:33**).

Note: For the first time in the Song of Solomon, the name *Shulamite* appears. We have consistently referred to the young maiden by this title, simply because no other is given. Various explanations have been offered as to the meaning and derivation of the name:

It could be the name refers to the town of Shunem, a village north of Jezreel and mentioned several times in the Old Testament. David's last concubine, the beautiful Abishag, was from this town (**1 Kings 1:3**).

It is possible the name is the female form of *Shlomoh*, the actual Hebrew word translated as 'Solomon' in the King James Bible. If this is the case, then the king was already claiming the young girl as his possession.

Whatever the name might mean, this was just another appeal to convince her to be unfaithful to her shepherd. The men in the entourage wanted to gaze upon her. Perhaps this was in order to have her dance and further entice stares and catcalls from the men traveling with the king.

**The Shulamite's Exasperation verse 13b** In her own naiveté, the young girl wondered what this group of men might possibly find so attractive.

Note: Once again, we find ourselves at the mercy of Hebrew poetry. The phrase *the company of two armies* is a literal translation of the Hebrew word Mahanaim. In **Genesis 32:2**, Jacob gave the place its name when he saw the angels of God coming out to meet him (thus, two camps...the camp of God and the camp of Jacob). Later, the city of Mahanaim became a Levitical city and served as a place of refuge for Ish-bosheth (**2 Samuel 2:8-9**) and for David when he fled from Absalom (**2 Samuel 17**).

The words *as it were* might indicate the travel companions of the king had found in her a beautiful oasis in the midst of what they considered a crude and unsophisticated region. This is how the world treats the church, is it not? Society is willing to allow religious rites and actions, as long as there is nothing serious attached to them. Statues, decorations, and a hint of mystery are all well-and-good, but please refrain from implying there might be an issue of sin with which to deal.

The obvious disinterest of the young girl towards the king only served to provoke him further and his words would turn coarse and suggestive. The mask of politeness he had been wearing and the poetry he had employed would be put aside. The king had an appearance to keep up and a crowd to impress.