



Love's Distinguishing Composure

Having Done All To Stand

| Song 7:1-13

Introduction

The Shulamite refused to become a part of the king's performance. Surrounded by his entourage, Solomon played the role expected of him. When the young girl refused his advances, he tried one last effort. He addressed her with an unblushing boldness, believing her to be like any other woman he had conquered. If subtlety would not get him anywhere, then he would attempt to seduce her.

1 Kings 3:5-10

Early in his reign, Solomon asked God for wisdom and it was granted to him. Time had passed, the king acquired several wives, and his pursuit of earthly things (Ecclesiastes 2:1-10) changed him into a nearly unrecognizable leech. Solomon's wisdom, which was originally 'from above', became 'earthly, sensual, and devilish.'

James 3:15-16

This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

At this point in the story, Solomon looked over the young girl and allowed his eyes to wander. The things he said to her were not appropriate at all.

As we enter this portion of our study, a couple of things must be considered:

When compared with how the shepherd described her (4:1-7), an obvious contrast can be detected. Of course, he treated the Shulamite as he would have treated his own sister (4:9). Likewise, the shepherd talked about her physical features to a certain extent, but he did not fail to include aspects of her inner beauty (4:7,10).

If this speech given by Solomon is truly vulgar, why would God allow it to be part of His Word? Because God never leaves Himself without a witness (Acts 14:16-17). Solomon knew nothing about the church and could never have imagined Jehovah would somehow receive glory through his vile imaginations.

But the Holy Spirit knew, and used this speech to identify in a magnificent and surprising way, the character of the church. At first glance, this would appear to be something dirty, but beneath the surface lies a beauty man could never accomplish.

Therefore, watch carefully. Just as satan would desire to sully the reputation of the Bride of Christ (Revelation 17:1-7), Solomon was employed to pervert the true beauty of the Shulamite. Know this: neither was successful and God always has the last word.

The Sovereign's Foulness 7:1-9

The Shulamite's Feet 7:1 Beginning at the ground, the king worked his way up, describing the body of the young girl. As a young farm girl, she might have sandals on her feet or perhaps she was barefoot. The king, of course, would have imagined those feet shod with jeweled slippers. He envisioned what she could become, if only she would give herself to him.

Note: There is perhaps another indication to be found in this verse. The word *shoes* is used elsewhere to indicate a refusal to marry (Deuteronomy 25:7-10). It could be Solomon was saying, 'Even in your refusal to marry me, I find your stubbornness attractive.'

In our culture, it seems strange to make note of someone wearing shoes. In the Bible, though, shoes were the first things placed upon the feet of the prodigal son when he came home (Luke 15:22).

For Moses at the burning bush, in the presence of God, he had to remove his shoes as an acknowledgment of the great distance that existed between himself and the Almighty (Exodus 3:5).

As for the image of the church, we might think of the place where the church comes in contact with the world. While we must be in the world, Paul said our feet should be 'shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace' (Ephesians 6:15). And why must that be so? Because 'beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace' (Romans 10:13; Isaiah 52:7). We are in this world to make contact for Christ.

Then, Solomon's eyes rested upon her thighs. Dressed as she was for work, he could only imagine her form. Again, he would envision how she would look dressed as a queen.

Even more, in scripture the thighs speak of strength. When Jacob wrestled with the angel, he could no longer fight when his thigh was put out of joint (Genesis 32:25). At that point, he was a broken man, able only to cling. Likewise, when our Lord comes back to reign, He will have His sword girded on His thigh (Revelation 19:16). Thus a symbol of power and strength.

Of course, satan is adept at persuading us to trade our spiritual power for some temporary pleasure or possession. While marveling at the power placed at the disposal of the church (Matthew 28:18, Ephesians 1:19-20), he longs to subdue us and bring humiliation upon our Great Shepherd.

The Shulamite's Form 7:2-4 Here we begin to be conscious of Solomon's coarseness and disregard for the young girl's embarrassment. Once more, behind his flatteries lay a reality of which the king was unaware...the reality of the incomparable beauty of the church of Jesus Christ.

Note: In John 11:49-52, the high priest, Caiaphas, managed to prophesy things concerning Jesus about which he could not have known. In this instance, the Holy Spirit was able to use the words of a murderer to bring about glory for God's purpose.

in Titus 1:12-13, see the words of Epimenides

We are left to imagine what Solomon intended by comparing the young girl's navel to a goblet full of spiced wine [the Hebrew word used here means *mingled* and indicates alcoholic wine]. But in poetic symbolism, the navel is a picture of independent life. Every child was once mysteriously wrapped in its mother's life and existence, only to be brought to birth and given a life of its own. Only a vestigial token, the navel remains as a mystery of that previous life.

This is true of the church. It was hidden throughout the Old Testament (Ephesians 3:3-5) and brought to life by Christ through His apostles (Matthew 16:18) in the Passover observance (Matthew 26:26-28).

At Pentecost, her birth was celebrated with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), baptizing the believers into the mysterious body of Christ. For the purpose of God, the umbilical cord was cut and the church was given a dynamic life of its own.

Note: Always remember the adage: *The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.* Throughout the Old Testament, the picture of Christ and His Bride can be seen in many stories: Joseph married a Gentile bride (Genesis 41:45), as did Boaz with Ruth.

Solomon went further and described the Shulamite's body as a bundle of wheat encircled by lilies. With a grasp at poetry, even in the midst of these lurid remarks, Solomon managed to tell us her body was lovely.

But again, the king spoke far beyond his knowledge of future spiritual truths, because wheat is the Holy Spirit's chosen symbol for the church. Israel is likened to the *fig tree* (Luke 13:6-9), the *olive tree* (Romans 11:17-25), the *vine* (Psalm 80:8-12), and the *cedar tree* (Ezekiel 17:22-24).

These are all trees of the wood, firmly rooted and planted in the earth, and therefore, fit symbols for God's earthly people. Wheat, on the other hand, is quite different; it is a hardy annual plant. It dies downward toward the earth as it ripens upward to Heaven.

Spiritually speaking, wheat is reaped from the earth annually in successive harvests and is gathered over yonder into God's great garner of glory. It is left here only so long as it is necessary for it to grow to maturity, to grow lovely and useful, and then it is taken away from the world altogether.

cf Matthew 3:12 (9:37-38) 13:25-29
John 12:24-25

Solomon continued to allow his eyes to wander (7:3). As the king gazed upon the Shulamite's noble womanly shape, he saw, as it were, a pair of fawns standing hidden in the long grass and far from the hunter's bow. This was his poetic way of describing the Shulamite's capacity for life and love.

She concealed her budding maturity as best she could with her long hair. For Solomon, the love life of the young girl was as far removed from his reach as the timid deer is from the blundering hunter in the field. Although full of lust, Solomon was unable to get anywhere near the Shulamite. Armed with her personal chastity, she held herself aloof from him, as one who was pledged to another.

The church would do well to remember this. As the people of God in this world of lust and licentiousness, we will never appear more attractive and noble than when we keep ourselves pure and our hopes fixed on our Beloved Shepherd. The Lord desires His church's innate capacity for life and love be reserved for Him.

The world desires the *program* and the *product* of the church, but never seeks after our *purpose*.

2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1

Note: In the Old Testament, God likened idolatry to adultery and punished Israel accordingly (Jeremiah 3:8).

Upward Solomon's eyes moved, towards the Shulamite's neck (7:4a). In scripture, to be 'stiff-necked' was a picture of stubbornness (Exodus 32:9; Acts 7:51). This is a holy application of that image. The Shulamite would not be cowed or conquered and the more he tried, the king could not bend her to his will. Indeed, the harder he tried, the higher she held her head in resistance.

The neck, of course, holds up the head. For the church, Christ is the Head (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18). Our task is to represent and hold forth Christ: to live pure and holy lives that would be used to draw all men to the Savior (John 12:32).

The Shulamite's Features 7:4b-5 Solomon's eyes continued to rove ever upward. Once more, we are left to pull apart and examine the strands of Hebrew poetry that would confuse our modern perspective. Underlying the lascivious words of King Solomon is a further description of the church. The lessons we would gain only become clear when we see it in such a manner.

He saw her eyes as the pools of Heshbon located near the Bath-Rabbim gates of the city. Heshbon was situated about twenty miles east of the Jordan River, far into the wilderness. Unlike the inhospitable territory around it, the village was an agricultural oasis and was suitable for grazing sheep (Numbers 32:3,37). Originally, Heshbon was inhabited by Moabites, but it was conquered by the Amorites and in turn Moses conquered it and converted it into a Levitical city (Numbers 21:21-30).

Like the village of Heshbon, the church is an oasis in a barren and dry land. In the church, God's sheep find a grazing place...a place to feed on the Word of God and to be nourished thereby. Additionally, the church, filled with the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9-10), is to serve as a positive influence on the lost who find themselves living far from the center of godly worship.

Just as those pools contained fish, the church is to seek out and catch those lost fish for the Lord (Matthew 4:18-19; Mark 1:16-17).

Additionally, as those clear pools would reflect the blue sky of Heaven above, so too should the church reflect the glory of Heaven and the God Who resides there.

Finally, the name *Heshbon* means 'reckoning; a settling of accounts.' There is coming a day of judgment when all sin will be judged (Romans 2:16; 1 Peter 4:5). For the church, this will take place at The Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). For the lost, this will occur at The Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15). Everything in this life will be settled once and for all.

From her neck, Solomon looked at her nose, and there he saw something defiant. Why else would he describe it in such a way? Most likely, the Shulamite had turned her nose up at it him. No one had dared to ever respond to the king in such a manner.

Picture the scene: the king rambled on and on, moving beyond good taste, overcome by his desire...and there she stood. What other response could she possibly give to one so out of control? She turned her head slightly, refused to make eye contact with him, and turned her nose up in disgust.

The king's eye moved back, to take in her face and the features of her head. Here he saw something distinguished. Like Mount Carmel, rising above the plains of northern Israel, the Shulamite managed to hold her head in such a way so as to exalt herself above the pubescent actions of the king of Israel. As Solomon continued to lust after her, she presented herself...her body, her character, her reputation...in a manner fitting of a dignified person. SHE was not the one out of control; it was evident to the king and no doubt, to his entourage.

Note: Mount Carmel is the location where Elijah withstood the prophets of Ba'al (see 1 Kings 18:15-40). Thus, the reference here would illustrate the defiance of the Shulamite and her unwillingness to become a victim of the king's passions.

In the bright sunlight, the raven-colored hair of the Shulamite took on a purple sheen; purple, of course, being the color of royalty. Solomon found himself imprisoned in her hair. Those curls and waves, so soft and flowing, had the power of iron chains to enthrall and enslave him.

NOTE: the Hebrew word translated *galleries* means 'tresses or locks'

The Bride of Christ must maintain such a stance when confronted with the wiles of the devil. The church has been attacked from all sides, faced countless allurements and besieged day and night by the tempter. Thus, it is not merely a matter of a 'holier-than-thou' attitude. As Christ's spouse, the church must maintain a distinguished character.

The church is a partaker in the divine nature of God. It is bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. The splendor of Heaven knows nothing of the honor to be bestowed upon the Bride throughout eternity: she has been bought with a price.

It is for this reason, then, the Christian cannot dare give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27). It is beyond our honor to do so.

There is something disturbing about the church, from the perspective of satan. Think about it: his demonic forces cannot possess believers; they are beyond his grasp. The devil is incapable of endangering their eternal security (Romans 8:33-34). The church is already seated in Heaven, in Christ, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named (Ephesians 2:6-7).

Like a moth, flitting around a flame, warned off by the heat but fatally drawn by the light, satan is at once both repelled by the church and yet drawn to it to his own destruction. He cannot leave the church alone, although he knows his eternal doom is guaranteed by her salvation.

Solomon's desire for the Shulamite girl had escalated to a burning desire. He was no longer controlled by the decorum of his kingly status but by his own passion and lust. Years later, he would come to understand this better and would offer valuable advice to his own son (Proverbs 6:25-32).

verses 6-7 The king observed how beautiful the girl was and claimed her body would serve his desires well (*for delights*). With unrestrained speech, he stood unmasked by his own words. He compared her body to a slender palm tree and to the fully ripened fruit of the vine...she was old enough now to be his.

In **verses 8-9**, the real power behind his words is seen. The repetition of **I WILL** allows us to know it is satan driving this passion to a frenzy. The words *take hold of* literally mean 'to seize by force.' Satan, who would not be denied the very throne of Heaven, pushes mankind to crave only for himself and what he desires (Isaiah 14:12-14).

2. *The Shulamite's Fidelity* 7:10-13

At this point, what was to stop the king of Israel from simply moving forward in his lust? No man in his court would be willing to stay his desires. From our perspective, the young girl was doomed to be taken by force...to forever be branded by the out-of-control intoxication of Solomon. What hope did she have for the future? What about her shepherd and the dream she held in being his wife? Could it be that all the professed love...the glances towards one another, the plans the two had made, the poetic declarations of fidelity...would be swept away?

With no visible power or influence of her own...no brothers to protect her, no protests from the court...the Shulamite simply stood her ground (**James 4:7**). *I am my beloved's*...this was the third time she proclaimed these words in the book:

in **2:16**, she used the idea of devotion and possession to persuade her family that her relationship with the shepherd was right

in **6:3**, she declared the same to the Daughters of Jerusalem when they sought to add the shepherd to their attempts at satisfaction

And now, she proclaimed once-and-for-all that Solomon could not take what had already been promised to another.

Notice in this context, the Shulamite did not even mention the duality of the relationship. At last, she has not relied on her own love for the shepherd to save her from harm. Rather, she placed all of her trust and hope in the one who declared his devotion for her:

I am my beloved's and his desire is towards me.

Romans 5:8

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Finally, she understood it was not her beauty, her body, or her position in society that made the shepherd love her. Hearing Solomon speak, she understood the difference between lust and love. The shepherd *loved* her...for no other reason than he wanted to.

By contrast, Solomon *lusted* after her because of what she could do for him and how she could make him feel. If she did nothing to earn the love of the shepherd, she could do nothing to lose the love of the shepherd.

Christian, do you understand? You did nothing to earn the love of Christ (**Titus 3:5**). Your salvation is not dependent on how much you love the Lord...you could never love Him as much as He loves you, anyway (**Ephesians 3:19**). So stand there in your salvation. Submit yourself to God. Resist the devil. He will flee from you.

I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

With that thought, the Shulamite was freed from the vulgar flatteries of King Solomon. It had been an intense time of trial for her...blushing at the king's words and not knowing what his further actions would be. Once again, her thoughts returned to the one she truly loved.

verses 11-13 There were two things the Shulamite wanted and she yearned for them more than anything else in the world; certainly more than anything King Solomon had to offer her.

She Wanted To BE With Her Beloved 7:11a

'Come, my beloved,' she cried. This is the cry of a loving heart separated from the object of its affection. *Come, and take me away from all of this perfumed life. Take me away to be with you.*

Note: If Solomon were really the object of her affections in this story, how comfortable would he be here? Would a pampered king want to be in the fields, visiting peasant villages or checking on the vineyards? By his own testimony, Solomon desired a life of comfort (Eccl 2:7-8). Obviously, this attempt 'to get away from it all' was made with another in mind.

The greatest promise Jesus ever made was the guarantee He would come again and receive us to Himself (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). We should desire to be where He is, too (2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 22:20).

The thought of the Lord's coming is intended to serve as an antidote against the pull of this world. Regardless of the material things that compete for our attention and the emotional attachments we place on them, we should set the thought of the Lord's return firmly in our hearts...*He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself* (1 John 3:3).

She Wanted To FLEE With Her Beloved 7:11b-13

In this passage, there are two things to take note of:

She had somewhere to go with him 7:11b-12a

She wanted to go with him into the fields, the villages, and the vineyards. In other words, she wanted to go with him to the places where she had labored so diligently in times past, before she had been sidetracked by Solomon.

Malachi 3:3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

As blood-bought Christians, have we lived in such a manner we would desire to show Christ the scenes of our past efforts on His behalf? What souls would you show Him? What testimony have you shared with friends and loved ones? What answered prayers could you offer up as proof of your service? What time and talent would you display as having been proffered on His behalf?

Or are there places you sincerely hope the Lord never asks to visit in your past?

The Shulamite had somewhere to go with her beloved. She was not ashamed to return with him and openly abide there. Can you say the same?

Philippians 1:20

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

She had somewhat to give him 7:12b-13 Of all the material things she might have wanted to offer him, surely the two items she had were the ones he wanted most:

The fervor of her love 7:12b The word *loves* carries the idea of tokens or expressions of love. This could be affection shown or even terms of endearment. Unhindered by the outside world, the Shulamite would be free to express her affection for the shepherd in any number of ways.

The fruit of her life 7:13 In the culture of the Old Testament, mandrakes were believed to be useful in fertility (**Genesis 30:14-16**). To mention them here was to indicate her desire to be his wife and to give him children.

Likewise, the Shulamite indicated she had been storing up the good things of her life, things new and old, for her beloved. Her falling in love with him was not something which had only recently occurred to her. She had been waiting for him.

Our Beloved wants nothing more from us. What could we possibly give to the One who owns everything? Anything the Lord could desire is at His command. But two things He prizes beyond any other gifts: *the fervor of our love* and *the fruit of our life*.

Have you experienced intimacy with Christ? Do you walk daily with Him and express your gratitude for salvation and the promise of eternal life? Do you talk with Him and cast all of your cares upon Him? The Lord has promised He would remain close and we could call upon Him for any need or want we might have. It is shameful we do not draw closer to the One who gave Himself for us.

And what about the fruit of your life? Many might wait until they get to Heaven and be glad to simply arrive within the gates. The true Christian lives his life for Jesus to the fullest NOW. To one day lay at His feet the efforts of a life spent for Him...to watch as the fire of judgment reveals the gold, silver and precious stones of our labors...oh, that will be glory!