

"Arise, My Love, My Fair One"

"As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

SONG OF SONGS, CHAPTER TWO

The true bride of Christ stands out from all her surroundings with the unmistakable distinction of a lily among thorns—a sobering and impressive lesson on the responsibilities of our exalted position. The lily—harmless beauty and purity; the thorns—poisonous and vicious. We do not claim this distinction, *we set it before us as an inspiration*. We strive to approach it as the ultimate ideal. We compare ourselves with it, endeavouring to remove the thorny characteristics, and cultivate the lily like ones.

"Be not afraid, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid" (Ezek. 2:6).

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V. 3, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

The picture is one of the discovery, by a hungry and weary traveller, of a familiar, friendly, fruit-bearing tree in the heart of a wild and fruitless forest.

There is a beautiful parallel here—the Bride as the solitary, gentle, defenceless lily among all the rough aggressive thorns; the Bridegroom as the single life-giving tree throughout all the dark, unfriendly forest.

V. 9, "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."

This has been very fittingly explained as follows: *"What is the wall, but our mortality which separates us from him, and what is the lattice but our faith through which we catch a shadowy glimpse of his perfection?"*

Verses 10 to 13 are among the most intensely joyous and comforting of all God's Word—

"My beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past."

The wording is so personal and real, with the extreme simplicity of perfect intimacy and understanding. Those whose hearts are united in love do not speak in formal or complicated language. The simplest of terms have limitless meaning.

"The rain is over and gone" (v. 11).

The Palestine winter was a long rain of tears over a cold and barren earth. But the dark period had a glorious purpose that was revealed with the advent of spring.

"The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come" (v. 12).

The solitary lily among thorns suddenly finds herself surrounded by a vast host of glorious companions, the thorns having all been swept away. And the air will ring with a tremendous symphony of praise.

"There is a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance"

(Eccl. 3:4).

The time for weeping and mourning will have ended; the time for laughter and dancing will have come.

"Awake and sing, ye that, dwell in the dust"—"Break forth into joy, sing together: the Lord hath comforted His people."

"They that carried us away captive required of us a song, and they that wasted us required of us mirth. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" While all the evils and miseries of sin lay like a poisonous fog over the whole earth; how can we laugh except in self-centered indifference to sorrow and pain?

"The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land" (v. 12).

That is our signal for rejoicing and song—the signal so anxiously awaited through the darkness of the night. The turtledove was the poor man's offering—the humble symbol of harmlessness, love and peace.

"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" (v. 14).

"Stair" here means "rocky ascent" or "steep place." Our Dove has ascended from us and is at present hidden high in the recesses of the everlasting Rock, but the signs are that his voice will soon be heard.

"The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell" (v. 13).

This is his specifically appointed token for intensified watchfulness and care—

"Behold the fig tree and all the trees . . . When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Luke 21:29-30).

This symbol melts into a more immediate and sobering one—

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes" (v. 15).

In the general picture of approaching spring, the vines are mentioned with their early budding grapes. The thought arises, what of the ever-present dangers that may unnoticed steal away the fruit, and mar the joyful scene with the shameful barrenness of careless neglect?

"Friend, wherefore art thou here without a wedding garment?"

What has happened to the oil in your lamp at the very moment that it should be burning with its brightest glow?

Little foxes are such attractive little creatures, but appearances are deceitful and natural impressions are misleading; little foxes are sly and destructive. *Little* foxes soon become *big* foxes, their playfulness leaves them and they become cunning and cruel and very hard to catch and destroy.

V. 17, "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."

For "Bether," the margin gives "division" or "separation." This final verse is the patient waiting of the saints during the time of separation from their Lord, founded upon the vision of verses 10 to 13, and the patient confidence of v. 16, "*My beloved is mine, and I am his.*"

"I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please" (Song 3:5).

This is a balancing companion-thought to the injunction to "give Him no rest till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." We must cultivate both patience and eagerness, longing and resignation, contentment and desire, an inner haven of quiet joy that transcends but does not ignore the sorrow of the world.

(Taken from "Be Ye Transformed" Volume 4 pages 126-128 by Bro. G. Growcott)