

**Song of Solomon 8: 6b; “Love Stronger than Death”, Sermon # 70 in the series –
“I am My Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 24th, 2022,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

I believe that it is Christ who is speaking to His Church, here in verse 6. And He is speaking to her of what He would have her to do, because she loves Him. He would have her to set Him as a seal on her heart. This means that He wants you, as a Christian, to be devoted to Him, even when you cannot see Him face to face, as of yet. He is saying that you, who are a part of His spiritual Bride, the Church, you should send spiritual love letters to Him, your Heavenly Bridegroom. You should send special thoughts of your love in your prayers to Him. You tell Him that you are often thinking of His love for you, and what He means to you. This is what the Lord’s Supper is all about as a special means of grace.

Christ is also saying that it is His desire that you would set Christ as a seal on your arm. This means that you will consciously be remembering Him in all that you are doing for Him. All that you are doing for Him should be done from the standpoint of your love for Him, and your loyalty to Him. If you love Him, you will keep His commandments. You will wear your love for Him proudly on your spiritual arm; that is, everything that you do for Him. You will wear it like an armband for everyone to see. You are not ashamed of Christ and what He has done for You. You are not ashamed that you belong to Him. You will declare your love for Him in this more public way.

And so, now, let me open up for you what Christ is telling His Bride that His love is like for her. 1st of all – He saying that His love is as strong as death. 2nd – He is saying that His holy jealousy is as cruel as the grave. And 3rd – He is saying that His love is like flames which are a most vehement flame. Since these verses are telling us that Christ wants His Bride to understand how great His love for her is, He also wants her to reciprocate her love; to understand how great her love for Him should be. It will be the most important thing in her whole life.

1st of all – Christ tells His Bride that His love is as strong as death.

He is expressing to her what He came to do by His Incarnation and through His earthly ministry for her, His Bride. And I believe that we should understand Him as saying – My love is as strong as death, and My jealousy is as cruel as the grave, and the flames of My love are a most vehement flame. In other words, we love Him because He first loved us. His love is a Perfect love. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief, says the apostle Paul. I am sure that we can all agree with this. But what I would like you to think about, is the length of Christ’s love for you, as a person who was a sinner, and who would one day become one of the saints which make up His spiritual Bride.

Turn with me over to Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 3. “The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.’” The Lord says here that He has loved all of His elect people with an everlasting love. This means, dear believer, that Christ Your Savior, as God the Son, He and the Father thought upon you from eternity past. He thought upon you as the Father purposed your creation; what kind of a person you would be, in all the natural abilities and gifts that He would give to you. God said to Jeremiah in Jeremiah chapter 1, verse 5 – “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

This should show us that not only did God purpose to give to us all the mental and physical abilities that we would have in this life, but He also ordained the whole purpose of our life for which He created us. In terms of those whom the Father would give to the Son, He knew what He

wanted us to do with our life and how we would contribute to Christ's kingdom in terms of the spiritual gifts and abilities that He would give to us by His Spirit. Knowing that we would be born into the world sinful, because of Adam's fall into sin, He also knew our own inherent propensities to develop all of our sins of pride and foolishness, and the selfishness of having other gods before Him. He knew, even then, about the many other sins that we would commit, related to our not being willing to do His will according to His commandments. This is why the Father knew that He had to send His Son into this world in order to be able to bring about anything good from our life.

To this eternally conceived purpose of the Triune God, to rescue us from perishing eternally, the Son responded immediately (if we can conceive this in terms which are akin to our limited understanding); He in His infinite love for the Father, and His eternal love for us, agreed to become our Redeemer. He was willing to fulfill every purpose related to our salvation. His love would be as strong as death for us. He was the only-begotten of the Father. He was brought forth in eternity past by the Father for just this very thing. "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost." "The Son of Man did not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

In other words, in eternity past, God the Son agreed with the Father, that He would, because of His great love for the Father, and for us, challenge and overcome death itself by His death on the cross. He willingly went forth to die on our behalf. It was Christ versus death. And by His dying as a perfect Man, He knew that death would not be able to hold Him. But still He knew that He must suffer all the pangs of death which we deserve to be punished with, and for, in order that death would be destroyed in relation to us personally.

Christ's love was stronger than death when He came into the Garden of Gethsemane. In Matthew 26: 37, He said to His disciples – "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful and deeply distressed." And He said in verse 38 – "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." Why was He experiencing these overwhelming sorrows, and felt like He was dying? He did not have any sins of His own. It could mean only one thing. He was suffering vicariously, taking our sorrows upon Himself and bearing the shame which we deserve, because of our sins in particular. He was suffering in our place, in the place of all those who would trust in Him for the forgiveness of their sins.

Christ's death on the cross was not done with a view to a hypothetic salvation (that is, to simply make salvation possible) or to bring about a universal atonement. He was dying for those particular sinners who would trust in Him personally. He was dying for those who because He died for them, they would reciprocate His love. Can you say, as Paul said in Galatians 2: 20 – "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in Me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." Since Christ loved us in this particular way, and for us in particular, since we have come to believe the love that God has for us, through Him, we can say – Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?"

What is wonderful in Paul's words there in Romans chapter 8 is what he says just before them in verses 31 and 32 – "What shall we say to these things?" "If God is for us, who can be against us?" ""He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" God gives us all things freely, because Christ has died for us in particular. If Christ died in a universal sense, for all men, God would have to freely give them all the blessings of salvation. He would have to make His blessings over to all men

indiscriminately. But this He does not do. Christ's love is stronger than death only for those who will trust in Him.

This does not include infants who die in infancy, or people who cannot ever respond to the gospel of Christ's love because of some physical disability. They will receive the benefits of salvation because of the greatness of Christ's love for them in particular too. All of us who have believed in Christ, can say with the Psalmist David – "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." "The Lord has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death." (Psalm 118: 17 and 18)

2nd – Christ is saying here that He is saying that His holy jealousy is as cruel as the grave.

I conceive this to mean that the Lord Jesus in His death for sinners, died in order to fulfill the 1st and 2nd Commandments of the Ten Commandments, in particular, as well as all of the rest of the commandments of God. The 1st and 2nd commandment of the 10 commandments are – "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." "You shall have no other gods before Me." "You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them." "For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

We need to see that Christ died for all of the sins of idolatry, that we His elect people, have ever committed. All of our unbelief, all of our having other things that we think are more important than serving God, all false worship, and all of our love of ourselves and people and the things of this life, more than Him. He loved us by loving God with all of His heart, soul, mind and strength. His jealousy being as cruel as death, is understood in light of what He died for. We need to understand our God as being jealous of us in regard to His expectation of our loving Him with all of our heart and being faithful to Him, even as a wife should be faithful to her husband.

Ephesians 5: 25 – "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." So Christ died the cruel death on the cross so that we would not have to experience the wrath of God eternally upon us, but rather we will find ourselves being presented to God without spot or wrinkle. Christ nourishes us and cherishes us by His grace when we believe in Him.

God's holy jealousy over our wandering hearts was satisfied fully in Christ's loving God with all of His heart. He never wandered away from God, one iota, in His love for Him; never once gave the Father any reason to be jealous of where His attention was, or to suspect His faithfulness to Him. And thus, when He went to the cross, Jesus could pay the penalty for our disobedience in this regard. The justice of God which is, and will be, experienced by those in hell for all eternity, may seem cruel to those who really think about it. But when you consider the holiness of God, when you consider the righteousness of God, and when you consider the love of God, you look at the cross and you realize that indeed Christ had to die for your sins in particular.

3rd – Christ is saying here that His is love is like flames which are a most vehement flame.

"Its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame." The King James translates this "The coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." The word "vehement" here

has reference to the consuming flame of God. In Hebrews chapter 12, verse 28, it says – “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” “For our God is a consuming fire.” Our Lord Jesus is the One who by His loving God with all of His heart, has purchased redemption for us. We should ask ourselves, if we have a love which will reciprocate with His love for us. Through Christ’s death, we come to have this kind of love.

Amy Carmichael, missionary at Dohnavur Fellowship in India, penned these words in the early part of the last century. “From prayer that asks that I may be sheltered from winds which beat on Thee, from fearing when I should aspire, from faltering when I should climb higher, from silken self, O Captain, free Thy soldier who would follow Thee.” “From subtle love of softening things, from easy choices, weakenings, not thus are spirits fortified, not this way went the Crucified: From all that dims Thy Calvary, O Lamb of God, deliver me.” “Give me the love that leads the way, the faith that nothing can dismay, the hope no disappointments tire, the passion that will burn like fire; let me not sink to be a clod; make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.”

That is the kind of prayer which Christ’s love ignites in our heart. In Acts chapter 2, verse 22, when Peter was preaching to thousands in Israel, some of those who were there were men who were directly responsible for approving of the death of Christ. And Peter said to them: “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as You yourselves also know – Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified and put to death; whom God raise up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”

This was because Christ’s love was stronger than death. The same day that Peter preached this sermon, was the same day as the Spirit descended upon those disciples who were gathered in the upper room of that house on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit manifested Himself to people present as divided tongues of fire resting upon them all. Peter preached about Christ’s death and His resurrection. He said that death could not hold Him. As we think about these words which Peter preached, we must come to the conclusion, that the death of death took place, for all believers, in the death of Christ. His love was not only as strong as death, but His love was stronger than death.

As we partake of these elements which are before us, let us remember that Christ’s love was a vehement flame, burning in His heart, to satisfy the justice of God. His love for God and His love for us was a vehement love where He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. He overcame sin and death by living a sinless life, and then dying a sacrificial death, on behalf of all sinners who will trust in Him. This is confirmed for us in Revelation chapter 1, verses 4 and 5 where John says – “Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth.” “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” This is what we will remember now.