

(8:5a) - WHO IS THIS THAT COMETH UP FROM THE WILDERNESS, LEANING UPON HER BELOVED? - The question is asked, "Who is this who comes up from the wilderness?". This is the bride of Christ (the true church) sojourning in this dark and sinful world, struggling against the flesh, the world, and the devil. How does she survive this difficult journey? How can she reach her ultimate destination with so much against her? God's Word states, "*If God be for us, who can be against us?*" (Rom. 8:31). How can we know that God is FOR us? The answer lies in the phrase, "*leaning upon her Beloved.*" Her Beloved is Christ the Lord of glory. The Lord God brings her to walk through this wilderness, not in her own power or goodness, but in the grace, power, and goodness of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are totally dependent upon Him for our whole salvation and preservation unto glory. He alone is able to save us to the uttermost (2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 7:25; Jude 24-25). Being in Christ, looking unto Him as the Author and Finisher of our faith, we can be assured that God is for us. In Him, we know that God has "*freely given us all things*" that pertain to salvation (Rom. 8:32). In Him, we are assured that God will not lay our sins to our charge because He laid them to Christ's charge (Rom. 8:33). In Him, we can be confident that we cannot be condemned because we are counted righteous before God in Christ, and He intercedes on our behalf (Rom. 8:34). By God's grace, true believers trust and lean on Christ and not to their own understanding (Prov. 3:5).

(8:5b) - I RAISED THEE UP UNDER THE APPLE TREE: THERE THY MOTHER BROUGHT THEE FORTH: THERE SHE BROUGHT THEE FORTH THAT BARE THEE. - Bible interpreters disagree on the speaker here. Some say it is the Bridegroom responding to the bride. If this is the case, then it is a declaration of the sovereign, powerful work of God to save and bring forth His children who make up the true church (the bride of Christ). The apple tree would represent Christ Himself (cf. Song 2:3) Who is Himself the tree of life. He sends forth His Spirit to give life and produce the fruit of God's grace in them. Christ, by the righteousness He accomplished by His death on the cross and which God has imputed to us, is the one ground of our salvation and the one source of spiritual and eternal life.

Others say this is the bride speaking of our lifting Christ up as we look to and worship Him (Isa. 45:20-22). Christ must be lifted up for our salvation. First, He must be lifted up on the cross to redeem us from our sins (John 3:14-15; 12:32-33). Then, He must be lifted up in His resurrection because, in His death, He established righteousness by which God justifies His people (Rom. 4:24-25). He must be lifted up into glory to be seated at His Father's right hand to make intercession for us (Rom. 8:34). He must be lifted up in the preaching of the Gospel whereby the Spirit gives life to the ones whom Christ redeemed (Rom. 1:16-17). He must be lifted up within the regenerate hearts of His people whereby God gives them faith to believe in Christ and brings them to repentance of dead works (Php. 3:7-9).

In either case, the "*mother*" that brought us forth would refer to the true church as the means God uses to call His elect into His kingdom through the preaching of the Gospel. The power of salvation and eternal life is not in the church. It is in the Lord, but He uses the means of His church preaching and witnessing the Gospel to the lost to give life to His children.

(8:6) - 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. - Again, there is disagreement amongst Bible scholars as to the speaker here. If it is Christ speaking to His church, He speaks of how HE has sealed His grace and love upon the hearts of His people as He sent the Spirit to give us

life and bring us to believe in and love Him (*Rom. 6:17-18; Eph. 1:13-14*). To have this divine seal upon our hearts is to be given a new heart and a new spirit to believe in and love Christ (*Jer. 31:33-34; 32:39-40; Ezek. 36:26-27*). This establishes the godly motives for obedience which are grace, love, and gratitude, rather than legalism (*Rom. 7:4-6*). To have this divine seal upon our arms means that we work and walk by HIS grace, power, and goodness and not our own (*Gal. 2:19-21*). In this case, we can truly say of our Lord that His love for us is as strong as death, for He loved us unto the death of the cross (*John 13:1; Php. 2:8; 1 John 4:10*). His jealousy (His zeal for the glory of His Father and the salvation of His people) sent Him to the cruel grave. His suffering unto death was all under the powerful fire of God's wrath as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people.

If it is the church speaking, she expresses the extent and assurance of HIS love for His people (His bride). Before the world began, God the Father made a covenant with God the Son wherein Christ willingly became our Surety. He willingly became responsible for our sins imputed to Him and agreed to do all that was necessary to save us from our sins, even dying for us. We (the elect of God) were sealed upon His heart (His love for us) and His arm (His power to save us). When He brought us to Himself with cords of love, as communicated unto us in the Gospel of His grace, the Holy Spirit shed abroad His love within our hearts (*Rom. 5:5*). This is Godly love that is as strong as death, for He keeps us in His love and keeps us loving Him. Death cannot destroy this love. He also has made us jealous for His glory, so that we have an undying desire to honor Him alone (*2 Cor. 11:2-3*). Looking to Christ, we know the grave cannot destroy our love for Him (*1 Cor. 15:55-58*).

(8:7) - 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. - Again, this verse could describe Christ speaking to us, or to our speaking to Him. The waters and the floods represent the troubles and trials of life in this wilderness world. Job said, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (*Job 14:1*). Concerning the trials believers would go through in this world, the Lord said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that IN ME ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (*John 16:33*). We are assured that no trouble we experience in this world can cause us to lose our salvation or separate us from the love of God in Christ (*Rom. 8:28-39*). The love of God for His people cannot be bought. It is free and unconditional towards us. If a person were to give everything he owned to try to buy this love, it would be utterly despised. Salvation is never conditioned on sinners. It was (and is) all conditioned on Christ Who, out of His love for His people (sinners), fulfilled all conditions to insure their salvation.

We know also that Christ Himself suffered many trials and troubles when He came to this earth, assumed sinless human nature, and walked among sinful people. But nothing He suffered could quench or drown His love for those whom the Father had given Him before the foundation of the world. As stated in *Song 7:10*, His desire always has been, and always will be, toward His bride (the elect of God). The Good Shepherd loves and died for His sheep (*John 10:11-30*). He loved and died for sinners, the ungodly. His suffering unto death had nothing to do with any loveliness or worthiness in those whom He loves. Again, we see how He is the worthy Bridegroom, and we are the unworthy bride. It is the greatest insult to Him for us to try to buy His love in trying to earn it with our works. This is utterly scorned by Him. His love for His people is unearned and undeserved. His love for His people inspired Him to suffer unto death to establish a righteousness by which God justifies them and from which He gives them spiritual life and brings them to glory. "Herein is LOVE, not that we loved God, but that He loved us AND SENT His Son to be the PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS" (*1 John 4:10*).