

Coming up from the Wilderness

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- [0 : 0 0] Now I'd like to turn to another part of the Old Testament scripture from the Song of Solomon in Chapter 8. The Song of Solomon in Chapter 8.
- And we may read the first five verses. Song of Solomon in Chapter 8.
- And particularly verse 5, the first part of it.
- May God bless that reading.
- And focusing particularly, as I said, on the beginning of verse 5. Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?
- [1 : 4 6] The Song of Solomon is part of a large body of writings that the scripture attributes to this wisest of men.
- The scripture says that Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. And this seems to be the very apex or the pinnacle of his writing.
- Because here he is talking about the most glorious of subjects. He's talking about Christ and his church. And the love that binds them together.
- If you read from the very beginning of the Song of Solomon, you find that they, as it were, speak to each other and of each other in such marvelous terms.
- When it says at the very beginning, Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, it says at chapter 1, verse 2. For your love is better than wine.
- [2 : 5 7] Your anointing oils are fragrant. Your name is oil poured out. And so on. And then he says of her, at the end of chapter 1, verse 16.
- Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved. Truly delightful. Our couch is green. And the beams of our house are cedar. Our rafters are pine.
- You are beautiful, my beloved. And then she says, Your mouth is most sweet. You are altogether lovely.
- So it's a marvelous illustration to us of the love that exists between Christ and his people.
- And of course this love existing between Christ and his people isn't confined to the Song of Solomon. You find in other parts of the Old Testament, for example, in Isaiah 54, Your maker is your husband.
- [4 : 0 2] The Lord of hosts is his name. And then in Isaiah 62, verse 5. As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.
- And then in the New Testament, at Matthew, chapter 22, That the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, Who gave a wedding feast for his son.
- So we have this theme, as it were, Like a scarlet cord of love, Running right through the scriptures. And when we come to chapter 8 of the Song of Solomon, As it were, In the middle of all these marvelous love words, We have this, we have this, Who is that coming up from the wilderness, Leaning on her beloved?

It's as if there's an element of surprise. Given all the statements of love and devotion The one has to the other within this love relationship, We have this kind of surprising question, Who is that?

Coming up from the wilderness, Leaning on her beloved. Well, of course, it is none other Than the beloved of the Lord, The Church of Christ.

[5 : 40] And she is leaning upon him. And she is coming up from the wilderness. And I'd just like to say a few words Under three headings, really.

The location that the Church Finds herself in. Her present location in this world Is in the wilderness.

What does that mean? Secondly, Her direction of travel. It says here That she is coming up From the wilderness.

And thirdly, Her posture As she travels Leaning upon her beloved. She is leaning upon him.

That's her posture. As she travels forward and upwards In this wilderness. Or up from this wilderness. So I'd like just to highlight A number of things That that brings before us.

[6 : 44] Really regarding The Christian life. And the Christian's experience. In this world. First of all, Her present location.

The Christian in this world Experiences A wilderness Experience Almost Like the children Of this real world Despite the fact That they were Saved so Mildlessly By the Lord From the tyranny Of the Egyptians They nevertheless Having come out of Egypt Through the doors Upon which the blood Of the Passover lamb Had been Put At least on the doorposts And the lintels They went out As free Nevertheless They went into A wilderness Experience And this is what we read In Our reading earlier on Deuteronomy chapter 8 When he says At the beginning of that Particular chapter And onwards Through the chapter You shall remember The whole way That the Lord your God Led you These forty years

In the wilderness That he might Humble you Testing you To know what was In your heart Whether you would Keep his commandments Or not And so on And he calls it Later on That it is A terrifying wilderness Or in the Authorised version A terrible wilderness It wasn't An easy journey For them Physically It was Very demanding It was Trying They were being Tested And the Lord Revealed to Themselves And to others That they were So wayward In their thinking And so Coming so far Short of what The Lord Required of them By way of Obedience To his word And we see here That the church Is in the wilderness What does this mean For us What kind of place Is the wilderness Well I'm going to mention A number of things Firstly

It's a solitary place A place if you went Into a wilderness Area And some people Go on holiday To these Very remote Parts of the world And they bring back Their pictures And you look All around And there is really Hardly anything To sustain life Nevertheless These places Have an attraction For some people And that's where They want to go But the children Of Israel They were Directed that way By the Lord For forty long And arduous years They experienced A wilderness And the people Of God In every age Have a wilderness Experience In Hosea We find this Marvellous statement I will allure her And bring her Into the wilderness He was going To bring her there And make ample

Provision for her there As she journeys Through a wilderness Experience And part of the Experience The Christian Has in the wilderness Is That is a solitary Experience But another Aspect of the wilderness Is That it's really Barren It doesn't sustain Much By way of giving us Food to eat And that's the way The wilderness Of this world Is for the Christian There isn't There isn't really Anything In this world As it is In itself That will sustain Us Spiritually Our manna Comes from heaven What sustains us Comes from above In the hand of The Spirit of God Besides being Born from above Which is The meaning of These words You must be Born again

[11 : 01] It means You are born From above And the Lord Comes and Applies to us Here Spiritual life By the hand Of his Holy Spirit And he sustains That life By his Holy Spirit Not this world This world Doesn't sustain us This world Wants to Drag us down This world Is full of The husks That will Feel Feed our Corruption And our Sinful nature But Our sustenance Spiritually Speaking Is from Heaven alone God's Provision And we are Left every day As it were Coming As beggars To the door Of the Lord Asking Remember me Remember to Sustain me Remember me With that love Which thou To thine Dost bear She is In the wilderness

In a solitary Place In a barren Place But also In a dangerous Place We read there About the dangers That the children Of Israel Were open To That there Were scorpions And fiery Serpents And various Other dangers As they Journeyed on And so it is With ourselves There are Temptations That come our Way There are Dangers In the way Satan lays Down nets As it were In our way To try and Ensnare And entangle Us In sin There is Always The power Of darkness Seeking to Undo us And seeking To trip us Up And seeking To bring Us down A place Of danger I often Think of The story The Lord Tells about The man Who went Down from Jerusalem To Jericho

And he Fell among Thieves And he Stripped him And left him Half dead I think That is an Example of What the Devil is Still doing He will Try and Rob us Of everything That he Is able To rob Us of He will Try and Rob us Of our Comfort By Putting Thoughts Of doubt Into our Mind It is as If he is Throwing Things Into our Mind And let These things Fester So that he Will bring Us to Doubt the Lord And doubt His word And not be So strong In faith As we Ought to Be He is Trying to Rob us Of our Strength Trying to Rob us Of our Light Of our Witness Rob us Of all the Good things That we Would seek To have In order To live A godly And god Glorifying Life The wilderness Is a Difficult Place It is a

Place That is Full Of danger Also a Place Where there Are many Thorns And prickly Things That may Look Innocuous And safe Enough From a Distance But if You Throw near Them And touch Them They might Poison You See As christians We have To keep Ourselves Dedicated To the Lord In mind And thought And word And action The devil The devil Will try And draw Us away So that We will Get stung By various Sins And various Aspects Of worldliness So that Our witness Is compromised So that Our lifestyle Isn't as God glorifying As it Ought To be Keep

Away from These things That are Dangerous And poisonous There's a story Told about A noble Lady long Ago Who was Looking for A coach Driver To employ Him And a few People applied And part Of what He asked Them In the Interview Individually Was this How near Would you Drive the Coach To the Edge of The cliff And still Maintain My safety And the First man Said well I would Drive Within a Foot of The cliff And you'd Be very Safe Madam And the Next man Said well I think I'd be Able to Drive within Six inches Of the Cliff edge And I Would guarantee Your safety And the Third man Said I Would keep As far Away from The edge Of the Cliff As I

[16 : 04] Could You're the Man I Want As my Coach Driver She said And there's Something there For us to Think about For ourselves Keep as far Away from Every known Sin as you Possibly can Because the Wilderness is a Dangerous place The wilderness Is a place of Danger and Place of Difficulty for the People of God That's the First thing She's in the Wilderness And the Lord is with Her there Secondly Not just Her present Location But her Direction of Travel is Interesting Who is that It says Coming up From the Wilderness It's an Upward Movement Or motion What does That really Mean Well I

Think at One level It means This That she Has turned Her back On the Lifestyle She had Before You see By nature Before our Conversion We're happy Enough with The world Happy enough With the Things around Us and What the World can Give us But you See when Grace comes In We have Become citizens Of a better Country Our affections Need to be Set and are Set on the Things that Are above And that Makes sure That the Direction of Our travel In this Life Is Upwards Having Turned Our back Upon the Sins of Our life By the Grace of God Having Repented And believed In the Lord Jesus Christ We leave The old Lifestyle Behind

We leave It And by God's Grace We turn Away Committing Ourselves To the Lord And it Says Here She has She is Coming up From the Wilderness It's amazing When the Scripture Talks about The kind Of Calling That Effectual Calling Is It says That it is A heavenly Calling God in Heaven Calls Us And he Calls Us Upwards To himself Our Ear Has Been Opened To hear His Voice Our Heart Has Been Opened To respond In Faith And Love And Obedience To his Voice Just like The prophet Isaiah In another Situation When you Read of Isaiah Chapter 6

And the Lord Revealed Himself To him In the Temple And the Lord Said Whom Shall I Send And who Will Go For us And Immediately Isaiah Says Here Am I Send Me He Didn't Know at The Time What The Service The Lord Was Giving To him To Fulfill Entailed A lot Of Difficulty But the Response Of his Heart And of His Soul Was Here Am I Send Me And that's What's Happened Here She Is Coming Up From The Wilderness She Has Turned Her Back Upon Her Old Ways She Has Turned Her Back Upon The Places Which She Used To Go To And Where She Used to Delight Herself In Because A sweeter Voice Has Come And a More Powerful Voice Enabled Her To Turn Her Back Upon Her Sin And Upon The Things Of The World She

Is Coming Up From The Wilderness Rolls revealed to us that it's not an easy journey.

[20 : 20] Along with it being a wilderness journey, with its dangers and so on, it is a journey that's full of difficulties.

Think, for example, of the difficulty of going up these hills in the wilderness. And the weaker you get, the more difficult they become.

And so it is with the Christian. There are various hills that come into our way that we have to negotiate. For example, isn't this a particularly difficult one to negotiate?

When the Apostle Paul describes in his own experience that he finds within himself a law warring against the law of his mind and bringing him into subjection to the law of sin which is in his members.

You see, he's not born forward, as it were, on the wings of an eagle, everything being easy for him.

[21 : 31] No, he realizes that there is a real problem within himself still. Although his sins are forgiven and he is a child of glory, he nevertheless realizes that there is still a remnant of corruption within him.

Within his heart, within his mind, within his thinking. And when he goes through this wilderness, it's as if he feels that there is a gradient against him because sin easily besets us, as it says in Hebrews chapter 1.

The sin that so easily besets us, drags us down, holds us back. I don't know what sin is particularly difficult for you.

Maybe there is one. Maybe they are all. But whatever it is, you'll find that the wilderness is a wilderness that you have to come up from.

And the opposition can be great regarding the corruption within. And what also about the wind and tide against you?

- [22 : 52] What about the wind and tide of modern society? Modern society that seems in this country to be so godless and channeled so much against through biblical Christianity. We find on every hand opposition to what you believe. Opposition to what the Bible says. And you find it so difficult.
- And like somebody said, I think I mentioned this before, you have to speak into the wind. The wind is blowing against us. And your witness has to be, as it were, made in the face of a gale of opposition.
- Maybe it's always been the case. I'm certainly sure it has been down through the centuries. But there are times it seems to be more distinct than in other times.
- And we see that this is true. She is coming up from the wilderness against all the odds, against every aspect of opposition.
- [24 : 03] She is coming up. Have you begun this journey? Maybe at the very beginning it's as if you felt you were flying on eagle's wings and everything was going so well.
- But then you realized this is a wilderness after all. This is a wilderness that's really not sympathetic to the way I think anymore, to the way I view things anymore.
- This is a place where I have to turn my back on all of these things that are anti-God and anti-Bible and walk up the hill of opposition and the hill difficulty in the strength and in the grace of God himself.
- Who is that? Coming up from the wilderness. It's a surprising picture, isn't it?
- The masses are happy enough in the wilderness, in the world and in worklikeness. But the Christian witness is the exception.
- [25 : 13] And it's surprising, as it were, to the one who is saying, Who is that? This is exceptional. An exceptional thing has happened in the experience of anyone who has turned their back upon this world and its sin and iniquity and who is coming up against all the odds because he has seen a glimpse of a better land and seen the glory of the king.
- You say, well, I haven't seen much of the glory of the king. Well, you have seen enough to make you realize that what he says is true and what he promises is better than anything that this world can offer you.
- You have seen the glory of Jesus as he reveals himself in the gospel. You have seen his glory, the glory of his power, the glory of his compassion.
- When he touched the leper and he said to him, I am willing to clean you, be clean. When he raised the young man, the son of the women of Nain, and he said, Young man, I say to you, arise.
- What compassion. What power. And he is able to do the same for me, to raise me. And I am willing to follow him and give myself to him despite the difficulties that may be associated with following him.
- [26 : 52] And thirdly and finally, we see here the posture of the church as she is coming up from the wilderness. She is leaning on her beloved.
- Leaning on him. Well, I think this indicates at least at one level her feeling of weakness in herself.
- Her inadequacy so far as she herself is concerned. And that's exactly the way you feel. You are weak. We are nothing.
- He proves to us repeatedly that we have no strength. We have no real wisdom except what we receive from him. We have no grace except what he freely supplies.
- And that's why she is here. Feeling her need of him, she leans upon him. Leans upon him totally. Leans upon him that she might be strengthened and encouraged and cared for him.

[28 : 02] Her beloved. She has found him to be one who has loved her. And she loves him in return because he first loved her.

We cannot love him motivated by anything within ourselves. By nature we are willing to turn away from him.

We find no place in our heart for him. But when he touches us by his saving influence, he sends his love into our hearts.

And that love responds by loving him in return. That's why you love his word. That's why you love to hear expositions from his word.

That's why you love his people. That's why you love his day. It's as if you see his character and his beauty associated with all of these things.

[29 : 06] Oh how I love you, Lord. It is my meditation all the day. He means by that the word of God. And he loved it. Because the Lord had loved him, he now responds by loving the Lord in return.

And you see what it says. She leans upon her beloved. She leans heavily upon her beloved. There is no one else to lean on.

Everyone else has proved insufficient as a support in the face of the trials and afflictions and testings of life. On whom can we lean?

Can we find ourselves sinners before God? To whom can we go? But to himself. Peter had it right, didn't he? When he said, you have the words of eternal life and we go to you and we lean upon you.

Come to me, he himself says, all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you will find rest unto your souls.

[30 : 25] My yoke is easy and my burden is light. Leaning upon her beloved and she has found her beloved to be a saviour to her.

He is the only one to whom she is willing to entrust her life, her soul, her all. He has proved himself to be a sufficient and a mighty and a loving saviour and she has no reservations about casting her all upon him.

Is that the way you feel this evening? He is a saviour. He is also, besides being her beloved, he is her physician.

He has proved himself to be able to deal with every malady of her soul and of her life. She comes to him in relation to her original sin and she realises the blood of Jesus Christ is able to cleanse her from all sin.

Original sin, actual sin, sins of thought and word and action. And she finds in him a suitable and mighty saviour, able and willing to cleanse her from all his sin.

[32 : 01] he is a saviour to her, a physician, able to give her strength when she is weak, able to give her light and wisdom when she is in her ignorance and unspirituality trying to grow up with the glories of the gospel.

Send your light forth and your truth, the psalmist said. Let them be guides to me, leading me to my holy hill, even where your dwellings be. And he sends forth his light and she leans upon him the giver of life and the giver of light, the giver of peace and the giver of strength, the giver of comfort and encouragement.

And he has said so many things by way of promise to her that she is able to live to him, not only the one who has given the promise, but who is able to fulfill every detail of the promises he has given, every single one of them.

If you listen to the Lord Jesus praying in John 17 and you hear him saying, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which you have given me.

he has prayed demandingly requiring that this be so and it will be so and you lean upon him as the one who has prayed these words and who will ensure that they are fulfilled in the experience of everyone who loves him, who has turned their back by faith upon the things of the world and trusted in Jesus and who now are coming up from the wilderness leaning upon him alone.

[34 : 06] Don't lean upon him and something else and someone else on him alone. That was the problem with the church of the Galatians.

They were as it were with a foot in each camp in the gospel and in law keeping as a basis of salvation. Don't do that. Cast all your burdens upon him and he will sustain you.

And that's what the church here is doing as an example to us all. Who is that coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved.

And we can impose this upon our own situations in the present day. We find ourselves also in the wilderness but we are travelling onwards and upwards by his grace and we are leaning upon him because we cannot make it on our own.

We cannot make it on our own. And the promise that the scripture gives is when he has begun the good work in you he will perform that work until the day of Jesus Christ.

[35 : 26] He didn't take her into the wilderness to let her die there. He took her into the wilderness to teach her, to humble her, to show her what was in her heart, and to show her himself.

Just as he did with the Israelites of old, he gave them a guide by day and a guide by night in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire.

He gave them feeding from heaven in the form of manna. He gave them water from the rock, a constant supply every day for every year until they went into the promised land.

And so it will be with everyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. They also will come up from the wilderness and at last be received into his nearer presence in heaven where they will rejoice with joy throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Let us pray., Did you mit ■ and to die e me to