

A Love That Lasts Forever

Song of Songs 8:5-14

Introduction: 1) Love is a wonderful thing. It is a very important thing. This is certainly the perspective of our God who directly addresses the subject several times in Scripture. We can immediately think of Matthew 22:34-40 where Jesus says the two great commandments are to love God and love your neighbor as yourself. We can immediately think of John 13:31-35 where Jesus says, “By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (35). We can immediately think of the beautiful “love chapter” of 1 Corinthians 13 where we learn that God’s kind of love “never ends” (8). And we can immediately think of 1 John 4:7-21 where we are reminded that “God is love” (8, 16).

2) Yes, love is a wonderful and important thing, but it can also be a confusing and misunderstood thing, especially in the context of romance. Too often people think they are in love when actually they are only infatuated with another person.

Making this mistake can be disastrous. How then can we tell the difference between the two? I came across a short comparison some years ago that contrast the two. It really helps bring clarity to the issue.

“Love or Infatuation”

Infatuation leaps into bloom. Love usually takes root and grows one day at a time.

Infatuation is accompanied by a sense of uncertainty. You are stimulated and thrilled but not really happy. You are miserable when he is absent. You can’t wait until you see her again.

Love begins with a feeling of security. You are warm with a sense of his nearness, even when he is away. Miles do not separate you. You want her near. But near or far, you know she is yours and you can wait.

Infatuation says, “We must get married right away. I can’t risk losing him.” Love says, “Don’t rush into anything. You are sure of one another. You can plan your future with confidence.”

Infatuation has an element of sexual excitement. If you are honest, you will discover it is difficult to enjoy one another unless you know it will end in intimacy. Love is the maturing of a friendship. You must be friends before you truly can be lovers.

Infatuation lacks confidence. When he’s away, you wonder if he’s with another girl. When she is away, you wonder if she is with another guy. Sometimes you even check. Love means trust. You may fall into infatuation, but you never fall in love. Infatuation might lead you to do things for which you might be sorry, but love never will.

Love lifts you up. It makes you look up. It makes you think up. It makes you a better person than you were before.

(Adapted from an article by Ann Landers. Located at lovstrand.com/Quotes/LoveorInfatuation.html and *Chicago Tribune News*, 4-18-98.)

3) There can be no doubt that the Song of Songs thinks that love is important too.

The theme runs throughout its 8 chapters and 117 verses, but it reaches a climax in the final chapter. Twelve different characteristics of the love God cultivates between a man and a woman in covenant marriage is addressed in 8:5-14. Here we will see that love truly is “a many splendored thing.” Here we will discover “a love that last forever!”

I. Cultivate a love that is public

8:5

1) For the 2nd time in our song we read the phrase, “who is this coming up from the wilderness: (cf. 3:6). Kinlaw says, “The wedding of the great king is reenacted in the [public] passion of the twosome; the kingly celebration serves an example for all lovemaking” (*EBC*, rev. ed., 425). Here is Solomon and Shulamite riding again in the royal chariot in full public display. She reclines relaxed and secure “leaning on her beloved,” [“leaning upon her lover” (*NIV*)]. Coming up from the wilderness recalls the time of Israel’s 40 years of wandering before entering the promised land. This couple has passed through those “wilderness periods” in their marriage and safely arrived on the other side. The wilderness also conveys the idea of the fall and its curse (Gen. 3; see also Jer. 22:6; Joel 2:3). Their love relationship is a redeemed relationship through God’s grace. The effects of the Fall and the Genesis curse (Gen. 3:16ff) have been reversed and the disharmony that sin brings into a relationship overcome. This is what Jesus Christ can do when He is Lord of our marriage. Frederica Matthews-Green says, “Women need men to call us up toward the highest moral principles; [men] need [women] to call them down to the warmth of human love and respect for gentler sensibilities... It’s clear that we need each other. You would almost think someone planned it that way.” [“Men Behaving Justly,” *CT* (11-17-97), 45].

The love that this king and his bride enjoy is something all the world should see and learn from.

II. Cultivate a love that is private

8:5

- 1) Our scene suddenly shifts from the chariot to “the apricot” (or “apple”) tree, from the public to the private. Once more the wife has initiated lovemaking. Under the tree of romance and sexual intimacy, “the sweetheart tree of the ancient world” (Glickman, 96), Shulamite awakens her lover, saying that it is, “There your mother conceived you; there she conceived and gave you birth.” This is a beautiful example of Hebrew parallelism.
- 2) Duane Garrett points out that the bride to be, “calls her beloved an apple [or “apricot”] tree in 2:3 and thus the figure of his mother being “under the apple tree” means that his mother was with his father. Similarly, the place where his mother conceived and gave birth to him refers to the female parts... The woman means she and he are now participating in the same act by which the man himself was given life” (p. 426). It is important to see that the passion and desire for sexual intimacy is still aflame in their marriage. Their private time alone in the bedroom has not grown cold or stale. Again we see that what takes place outside the bedroom impacts what takes place inside the bedroom. In that private sanctuary, he initiates lovemaking and she initiates lovemaking. Clearly, the king continues to “take pleasure in the

wife of his youth” (Prov. 5:18) and Shulamtie does the same with her husband. We should, by God’s grace, grow old together, but our love should never grow old.

III. Cultivate a love that is personal

8:6

- 1) The wife asked her husband to, “set me as a seal on your heart.” A person’s seal, here the seal of the king, was extremely important and personal. Jack Deere notes, “In Old Testament times a seal was used to indicate ownership of a person’s valued possessions. So the beloved asked to be the lover’s most valued possession...” (BKC, 1024).
- 2) She wants to be a seal, but one place in a very particular and personal location: “on your heart.” In the ancient world it was often the custom to wear a signet ring or cylinder on a cord or necklace around the neck and near the heart. Kinlaw notes, “To be imprinted as a seal on another is to be inseparable from that person. She wishes his life to be hers...” (EBC, 2nd ed. 426). For the King to love his lady in such a way that she felt near and dear to his heart would speak personally to her heart of his undying devotion and lasting love. As long as his heart beats, she wants to know and feel his love.
- 3) Believers in Jesus have a King who has set his seal on us, emblazing it upon our foreheads (Rev. 9:4) as a personal pledge of possession and protection. And, we did not even have to ask. Indeed, through salvation provided for us

in Christ, our God has “sealed us and given us the Spirit as a down payment in our hearts” (1 Cor. 1:22). We have his seal on our foreheads and his seal in our hearts. We are “double-sealed” by our great Shepherd-King. The personal and intimate love he has for those who belong to Him is a pledge and promise we should never doubt.

IV. Cultivate a love that is protective

8:6

- 1) This wife also wants to be set as a seal upon her husband’s arm. The idea is one of safety, security, and strength. If the seal on the heart spoke of that which is deep and inward, the seal upon the arm spoke of that which is public and external. It would be analogous to our wedding rings today (O’Donnell, 117).
- 2) True love will always have a protective attitude and disposition towards one’s mate. You will want them to feel safe and secure in the strength of your love. You will work mightily to guard them, protect them, shield them from anyone or anything that could damage, harm, or injure them. You will be their defender to whom they can always run for rest and refuge.
- 3) Now, let me make a very specific application at this point. It is very important. One of the most “lethal weapons” in a relationship is the little chipping at one another with hurtful and sarcastic barbs. This is deadly when done in public and in front of others. You develop and encourage a person

by magnifying their strengths, not their weaknesses. Take pride in your mate. Praise your mate. Learn to protect your mate, especially with your words.

V. Cultivate a love that is possessive

8:6

- 1) The word “for” tells us that the rationale for the previous statements in verse 6 are about to be given. Why does Shulamite want Solomon to set her as a seal on his heart and on his arms? “For [because] love is as strong as death, ardent love is as unrelenting as Sheol [the grave].” The word “ardent” is translated “jealousy” in a number of translations. What is Solomon saying here?
- 2) Love is as strong as death means it is universal and irresistible. It is going to get you! Indeed, it swallows down men and women once it has laid hold of them just as personally and possessively as does Sheol, death, and the grave. Paige Patterson says, “In godly love a righteous jealousy is as hard or inevitable as the grave” (117). It will not let go. There is a permanent possessiveness to the kind of love God gives to the godly man and woman in marriage. “Lovers are defenseless when in its grasp” (EBC, rev. ed. 426).
- 3) There is a popular saying in the world of athletics that says, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” That statement may be true. However, of one thing I am certain because the Bible says so, “When the

going gets tough, love keeps going.” It refuses to quit, drop out of the race, throw in the towel or let go of its lover. It is strong and unrelenting. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 13:7-8, “It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

VI. Cultivate a love that is passionate

8:6

- 1) This is a fascinating and much debated phrase. The variations in its translation bear this out:
 - a. *HCSB*: “Love’s flames are fiery flames—fiercest of all.”
 - b. *ESV*: “Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord.”
 - c. *NASV*: “Its flashes are flashes of fire, The very flame of the Lord.”
 - d. *NIV*: “It burns like a blazing fire, like a mighty flame.”
 - e. *CEB*: “Its darts are darts of fire—divine flame.”
 - f. *NLT*: “Love flashes like fire, the brightest kind of flame.”
 - g. *AMP*: “Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame [the very flame of the Lord].”

- 2) Now, why do some translations have the words “the Lord” [or “divine flame”] in them and some do not? It is because the last syllable of the word “flame” in Hebrew is “ya,” which could possibly be a shortened form of the divine name *Yahweh* (note the *CEB* translation). If this is correct, and I am inclined to think that it is, then God himself, *Yahweh*, is the source of this

blazing, passionate love (see also the *HCSB* marginal reading). The kind of love ignited and fueled by the Lord is a fervent flame, a blazing fire. As we will see in verse 7, nothing can extinguish this love. Like a raging forest fire, it burns with such an intensity that no one can control it. It is a passionate, God-given, red-hot flame that will endure any and all efforts to put it out.

- 3) Such a passionate love is the kind of love our Shepherd-King, our divine Bridegroom, has for us. His is a “great love with which he loved us” (Eph. 2:4). Indeed, he “loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). His is truly a passionate love “that surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:19). As the recipients of such a fervent, passionate love, let us, in passionate loving response, “be imitators of God...And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us” (Eph. 5:1-2).

VII. Cultivate a love that is persevering

8:7

1) And You Wonder Why It Didn't Last

*She married him because he was such a “strong man.”
She divorced him because he was such a “dominating male.”*

*He married her because she was so “fragile and petite.”
He divorced her because she was so “weak and helpless.”*

*She married him because “he knows how to provide a good living.”
She divorced him because “all he thinks about is business.”*

*He married her because “she reminds me of my mother.”
He divorced her because “she’s getting more like her mother every day.”*

*She married him because he was “happy and romantic.”
She divorced him because he was “shiftless and fun-loving.”*

*He married her because she was “steady and sensible.”
He divorced her because she was “boring and dull.”*

*She married him because he was “the life of the party.”
She divorced him because “he never wants to come home from the
party.”*

- 2) God designed marriage to last. Jesus said, “Therefore, what God has joined together, man must not separate” (Matt. 19:6). Marriage is not for a season. It is not like leasing a car. It is meant for a lifetime. Solomon says the love that God gives is so passionate and powerful, “Mighty waters cannot extinguish it; rivers cannot sweep it away.” Tom Gledhill puts it so well as he describes what he calls “the indestructibility of love”:

“For though water can quench any flame, there are no hostile forces which can quench the flame of love. It is inevitable that love will always be tested and tried, will always encounter forces that threaten to undermine and destroy it. These may be the outward circumstances that may erode love’s power: the pain of separation, the uncertainty of the present or future, the loss of health or means of livelihood. But the love which is fuelled by the energy of God will triumph and overcome all these adversities and will emerge purer and stronger and more precious through the testing” (234).

3) In Isaiah 43:1-2, the words that our Lord speaks to His people remarkably parallel these words in our Song. It again reminds us that the love we've seen on display between this man and woman mirrors and points to a greater love, the love our redeemer God has for a people He has chosen for Himself. What did our Lord say through His prophet, "Now this is what the Lord says—the One who created you, Jacob, and the One who formed you, Israel — "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. I will be with you when you pass through the waters, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. You will not be scorched when you walk through the fire, and the flame will not burn you."

VIII. Cultivate a love that is priceless

8:7

- 1) Real love, true love, cannot be bought. It has no price tag. It is not for sale. Craig Glickman is right, "By its very nature love must be given. Sex can be bought, love must be given" (101). Solomon tells us, "If a man were to give all his wealth for love, it would be utterly scorned." The ESV says, "He would be utterly despised." Try to buy love, he says, and prepare to be publically ridiculed and mocked. Prepare to become a laughingstock.
- 2) What are some clear and practical steps we can take to maintain and nurture this divine treasure deposited in our marital bank account by our lavishly

generous heavenly Father? I appreciate the suggestions of a lady named Joanna Weaver. Some of these are a real challenge. All are worth thinking about.

25 Ways to Love Your Lover

- 1) List the top 10 reasons I'm the most fortunate husband/wife in the world.
Read them aloud to your spouse.
- 2) Surprise your mate by doing one of his or her chores. When asked why, give a smooch and say, "because you are worth it."
- 3) Don't just show—tell! Say, "I love you."
- 4) Communicate your plans to each other. On Sunday night, go over your schedules for the coming week.
- 5) Use the T.H.I.N.K. method to determine whether an issue needs to be brought up. Is it true? Helpful? Important? Necessary? Kind?
- 6) Plan an appreciation celebration for your mate, complete with his or her favorite meal.
- 7) Look at your schedule. Make time with your spouse a weekly priority.
- 8) Bring back those dating days. After picking up the sitter, walk back outside and knock on the door with flowers in your hand.
- 9) Don't turn on the TV until after dinnertime, if at all. Wait for a conversation to break out.

- 10) Pray together. Thank God for your mate, then pray for his or her special needs.
- 11) On your spouse's birthday, send your in-laws a thank-you card.
- 12) Set boundaries in outside relationships. Don't let anyone take away too much of the time you spend with your spouse.
- 13) Are you seeing eye to eye? Experts have found the deeper the love, the more frequent the eye contact.
- 14) Pull out old love letters, taking turns reading and reminiscing.
- 15) Take turns reading the Bible each night.
- 16) Stretch out birthdays with special activities, fun surprises and a whole lot of hoopla.
- 17) Be a student of your spouse. Learn what he likes. Learn what she needs.
- 18) Treat your wife like a lady. Open doors and hold chairs.
- 19) Throw away fighting words like "you never..." and "you should..." Use healing words like "I'm sorry..." and "you might be right."
- 20) Make church attendance a joyful priority.
- 21) Instead of making a joke at your spouse's expense, give a sincere compliment.
- 22) Create traditions as a couple by budgeting money for special times together.

23) Be affectionate. Back rubs and tender hand-holding communicate love.

24) Choose your battles carefully.

25) Be a person of integrity. Give your spouse no reason to doubt your word or question your commitment.

IX. Cultivate a love that is pure

8:8-9

- 1) Verses 8-12 are not easy to interpret and good, godly Bible scholars admit their difficulty and also draw different conclusions. This is what I think is going on (see Deere and the BKC, 1024-25. My views are very similar to his). Verses 8-12 probably should be understood as a flashback to Shulamite's youth and her initial meeting of Solomon. She grew up in a family where her brothers had been hard on her (1:6), but they were also protective as well. They watched over her and gave attention to her moral development and maturity. Even at a young age when she was "a little sister" (ESV) who had "no breasts" they kept an eye out for her as they considered the time when she would give herself to a man in marriage. "If she is a wall" (9) speaks of moral purity and sexual unavailability. If she demonstrates such character they will honor her as a tower of silver, "a silver parapet." She would be given freedom and responsibility. On the other hand, "if she is a door," indicating moral and sexual vulnerability and weakness, they would enclose her and board her up in order to protect her. If

she is irresponsible and reckless in her moral conduct and sexual behavior, they “will enclose her with cedar planks.” They will wisely, and of necessity, restrict her freedom and opportunities for sexual foolishness and misbehavior.

2) Saving yourself sexually for marriage and giving yourself as a virgin to your mate may be out of style and old fashion in our sex-crazed culture, but it honors the Lord who redeemed you and it will bless the mate you wed. It will not be easy, but it is worth the commitment. How do you reach this lofty goal? A few ideas to consider:

- a. Remember that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and that you have been bought at a price, the precious blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
- b. Remember that you are to glorify God in everything that you do (1 Cor. 10:31).
- c. Pursue holiness and purity (1 Peter 1:15-16).
- d. Avoid the places of temptation and run from them (1 Cor. 6:18).
- e. Discipline your thought life by daily immersing yourself in God’s Word, seeking to develop the mind of Christ (Prov. 23:7; Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 2:5).

- 3) A final and important word on this point: it is never too late to pursue moral purity both before and in marriage. It is never too late to begin doing the right thing. In the gospel there is grace, forgiveness, and power. No sin, including sexual sin, is beyond the Savior's redeeming love.

X. Cultivate a love that is peaceable

8:10

- 1) Shulamite gives a personal testimony concerning her personal, moral purity and the blessing it was to her husband. She boldly declares, "I am a wall," meaning I was a virgin when we married. Now, as a vibrant, mature, and sensual woman ("my breasts are like towers"), "in his eyes I have become like one who finds peace." The word for "peace" is *shalom*, meaning completeness, well-being, wholeness. Purity equals peace in the marriage equation. Because of the faithful, pure, holy, and godly woman that she is, her man sees her as *shalom*, one who brings peace to their relationship. Mutual delight, joy and well-being is the fruit that was once a virgin garden, but is now his garden with its choice fruits (4:14-5:1).
- 2) This woman made this man complete, whole. She was that divinely sent companion, the helper who is his complement (Gen. 2:18, 20). In her presence he finds peace, he is set at ease. For him, the wall comes down and her towers fall into his hands. His banner over her is love (2:4), and her banner over him is peace (8:10). O'Donnell says it well, "His victory over

her virginity (ironically) brings peace—to her, to him, to them, to everyone around them” (129). So we see in marriage holiness is a path to happiness.

Purity is a path to peace. Just another gift ultimately provided by the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. 9:6-7).

XI. Cultivate a love that is privileged

8:11-12

- 1) As noted earlier, these are difficult verses to interpret. The precise meaning is vague, and Bible teachers are all over the place in how to understand the text. It seems to me that the main point is to show that Solomon, who was blessed with great wealth, had the right and privilege to administer his possessions in any way that he chose (11-12). Shulamite, though limited in her resources, had the same rights and privilege. This is especially true when it comes to giving her body (vs. 12, “my vineyard”) to a man in marriage.
- 2) Solomon “owned a vineyard at Baal-hamon” (location unknown) which means or translates “lord of abundance,” an apt description of his great wealth. “He leased the vineyard to tenants” (vs. 11), with the expectation of a 5 to 1 profit margin. For every 1000 pieces of silver brought to Solomon, the tenants would receive 200 (v. 11-12).
- 3) Shulamite also had a vineyard, her body (cf. 1:6). She belongs to no one except the one she chooses to give herself. Solomon may own thousands of

possessions, but she is given as a gift. Again, we are reminded: love cannot be bought, it can only be given. It is a privilege, not an obligation, to give your body to another, to give yourself to another person. Never lose sight of the truth that you are blessed and privileged to receive the affection and love of your mate. You cannot earn it and you really do not deserve it.

- 4) Do you ever look at your mate and think, “God gave her to me?” “God finely crafted this man for me?” You should. True love always has the quality of self-giving. After all, God so loved the world He gave His only Son (John 3:16).

XII. Cultivate a love that is permanent

8:13-14

- 1) These two verses constitute a fitting conclusion to the Song of Songs.

Appropriately both the man and woman speak, with the woman having the final word! These verses recall the days of spring. Shulamite is in the garden (v. 13), she who is herself a garden (4:12). Friends or companions are listening for her voice. She is a popular and much loved lady. And yet she belongs to only one man, and he is the one who wants above all others to hear her voice. His words have both a sense of urgency and passion, “let me hear you.” This is an exclusive request. It is a specific request.

- 2) She responds with words we have heard before (2:8, 17). She says come quickly “my love.” “Be like that gazelle or young stag” in mating season. Hurry and enjoy “the mountains of spices,” a reference no doubt to her breast (2:17; 4:6). Only her love is welcome there, and he is always welcomed there.
- 3) The mention of the garden again takes us back to Eden, to a time when the marital relationship had not been damaged or tarnished by the Fall. Throughout our song it is Genesis 1-2 that is in view, not Genesis 3 and all the heartache that followed the first couple’s sin. Here at the end, the love this couple shares is passionate. Indeed, by all indications, it is permanent. It will endure because it has its source in God (v. 6). It will endure because it is focused on the other and not on one’s self. She dwells in the garden. This is her home. This is where she lives. Her husband is called to join her there and to enjoy all the delights marriage offers. He will not look for female companionship anywhere else. Why would he? In his lovely lady he has found all that he could ever dream or hope for.

Practical Application

We began our study contrasting love and infatuation. Let's conclude in the same way. Below is a simple comparison provided by Josh McDowell. It is very applicable to teens and those who think they may have found their life partner, their "soul mate." Read and think through the list very carefully.

Don't rush. Really contemplate what is here.

What's the Difference Between Love and Infatuation?¹

Infatuation has been defined as "the emotional impulse of love, untested by time or circumstance." Since infatuation can lead to real love, sometimes it is difficult to see the difference. The characteristics in the chart below show the difference between infatuation and real love.

The Fairy Tale—Infatuation

- Fall into it suddenly
- Deepens little with time
- Wants sex now
- Up and down emotionally
- In love with love
- Fickle
- Can't eat or sleep
- Hostile break-up at the slightest irritations
- Emphasizes beauty
- Gets
- Based on my feelings
- Self-centered
- Shows emotion
- Physical
- Expects to find happiness
- Asks, "How am I doing?"
- Focusses on the performance of the other

The Real Thing—Love

- Grows with time
- Always deepening
- Willing to wait for sex
- Consistent
- In love with a person
- Faithful
- Has proper perspective
- Does not panic when problems arise
- Emphasizes character
- Gives
- Based on other's needs
- Self-controlled
- Shows devotion
- Spiritual
- Expects to work at happiness
- Asks, "How are you doing?"
- Provides unconditional acceptance of the

¹ <http://www.josh.org/resources/find-help/answers-for-teens/love/whats-the-difference-between-love-and-infatuation/>

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person • May feel this way toward more than one person • Possessive • May be based on few contacts (only person you've dated) • Has an idealized image of the other person • Avoids problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • other person • Feels this way toward one person • Allows the other person to relate to others • Based on many contacts (dated many others) • Has a realistic view of the other person's strengths and weaknesses • Works through problems |
|---|--|

How does this text point to Christ? The coming of the King!

- 1) Our song ends with the Bride asking her Shepherd-King to again come be with her (8:14). Interestingly, the Bible ends in exactly the same way. In Revelation 22, the bride twice asks for the Bridegroom to come to her and for her (22:17, 20). Then and only then will God's great love song and story be complete. Only then will it reach its intended goal. The Song of Songs ends by pointing us to that great day and the climax of history.
- 2) I really cannot improve on the words of Douglas O'Donnell, as he describes so well what the end of our song should engender in our hearts:

“It is my contention and others' that this ending leaves us longing for more. In other words, the Song intentionally ends abruptly and inconclusively because the Song is not done. Love is not done. God is not done with his great love song and story. The Song of Songs ends with this eschatological angst. What's going to happen next? ...Revelation, the last book of the Bible, a book that ends as the Song ends (interesting as well)...in Revelation 22:20, this is how the

book ends, how the Bible ends: in the last chapter and verse of our Bibles, our Lord Jesus/ the Bridegroom says, “Surely I am coming soon,” and the Church/the bride says, “Come” (v. 17), “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (22:20). Make haste! That’s how the Bible ends. That’s how the Song ends.

(Interesting indeed!)

So *virginity* and *eschatology* is what we have here. And what do both topics have in common? Waiting. (Something we as a culture excel in! Yeah, right.) Waiting for marriage; waiting for the marriage of the Lamb. Today we, as the Church, the bride of Christ, join the bride of the Song of Songs and her final plea. As we eagerly await the return of Christ (see Hebrews 9:28), “the descendant of David, the bright morning star” (Revelation 22:16), we hold our hands out with eschatological angst, knowing that only in the return and absolute reign of King Jesus can “the yearning for love [that] fills the cosmos” be met, consummated in and through and for the glory of Christ. The Apostle Paul puts it like this:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, *waiting* for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:11-13).

And so we wait.” (132).