

An Enduring Love

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 June 2025

Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0 : 00] Excellent. What do you make of this line? It's from a film that came out in 1987, and if you're wondering, I was too.

I won't ask you to work out the master of what you were. It's a film that had this iconic scene. Now, I've never watched this film, but I know this iconic scene, and I know this quote from this film, and the scene is these two characters who've been far apart in this film.

They're called Wesley and Buttercup. All of a sudden, at the end of the film, they're reunited, and they come out with this line. He says this over her. It's iconic.

He says, Death cannot stop true love. All it can do is delay it for a while. And lines like that, they kind of grab our hearts, don't they?

Lines like that, you'll hear them everywhere if you listen out hard enough for them in movies, in books, in musicals, and in particular, you'll hear them everywhere in songs, because we love the thought of a happily ever after.

[1 : 10] Love when you have it, it feels, doesn't it, like the most intoxicating and precious thing to you in the world when you have it, when you find it.

And because of that love, when you lose it, it feels like a piece of you goes missing. Summed up, I think, in that famous insight from Queen Elizabeth II, all those years ago, who just said simply, grief is the price that we pay for love.

Now, to some extent, as we bring this series home this morning, as we think about love when we have it and what it feels like when we lose it, to some extent, we all know what that feeling is like. But for many of us, we will know that pain so acutely and so deeply this morning, as maybe you recall that person who used to be in your life and you miss them more than words can convey.

And you've been so in my mind and my prayers this week as I've been studying this text. And my prayer for you has simply been that God would meet you and he would comfort you and he would remind you by his Holy Spirit gloriously of the most wonderful news that you'll ever hope to hear.

[2 : 26] Because this really is, as we take this in at the end of this song, this is the most glorious song that we could ever hope to hear. And that you would know that Jesus has gently placed the stories that our wounds tell within the bigger and the eternal story that his wounds tell.

And that's the theme of this couple's song this morning in the Song of Songs. Because what this is, is both a celebration and a declaration of a love that will last forever.

And it's a massive signpost to the only place where we can ever hope to experience a love like this and a love that's so much greater than this.

So let's pick this up, will we, at verse 5. As we get into this last little section of the Song of Songs. And through this song, if you remember this journey, if you're just joining us this morning, you're joining us right at the end of the series.

We've journeyed with this couple. We've thought about the fact that in this song, there is a kind of narrative progression. We've heard this couple at the beginning, and you can check these out online if you want to go back and get the series.

[3 : 43] We've met this couple. They've told us about their first date, as it were, where their eyes first met, how they felt about each other. It was all butterflies in the stomach. We've heard about their wedding day.

We've come through that. We've heard about a cold patch that they came through together. And last week, we heard them sing about just how exclusive their love for each other is. And now, as we approach these final few verses, notice the touching detail in the text.

Verse 5. That she is now leaning on her beloved. Do you see it? Now, question, when do people normally lean on each other?

Okay, think Bill Withers. Lean on me when you're not strong. When do we lean on each other? Periods of our lives when we're not strong, right?

So here, right at the end of the song, I don't think it's too much of a stretch, and a lot of commentators will say this as well, to view this couple as now being nearing old age.

[4 : 49] And if that's the case, here they are, verse 5, they're reminiscing about the early days, right? That's what's going on here. They're reminiscing about the early days. And it's almost as if she grabs the microphone at verse 6 and 7, and she sings all about the quality of the love that they have for each other.

And just see, there's two things in her song that she's telling us about their love. Firstly, she's telling us that she wants their love to be permanent. Do you hear that in her voice?

She's speaking to him. She's saying, set me as a seal upon your heart. Now, a seal there that she's singing about is just this marker of ownership. Okay, I often do this with my books when I buy them. Alex, knowing me well enough, bought me a personalized book name stamp a number of years ago. Still one of my favorite gifts I've ever received. And I stamp my books with this thing, Graham Shanks.

And that's what a seal is in this day. It's a stamp of ownership. And what she's saying is that I want you to write my name onto your body.

[5 : 54] That's what she's saying. I want you to make this permanent. And people do that, don't they? They get the names of their spouse or maybe the names of their children tattooed on their body. It's their way of saying that I will always carry your name permanently with me wherever I go.

And I take it she's talking about the arm there because that's just the most visible place. So she wants their love. She wants it to be permanent.

She wants it to be sealed. And then she moves from telling us about what she wants for their love and their relationship to telling us about what it means to her.

And I think that's what the word for there indicates. So to anyone who will listen, here's how she feels about their love and you can imagine her, she's scratching her head, she's thinking to herself, what is the most final and fixed thing that I can think of?

What is the one thing in life that really is permanent that's not going to change? And it might sound a bit morbid but see what she goes for and this is important for where we'll come back. Love is as strong as death.

[7 : 02] It's the most fixed thing, it's the most permanent thing that she can think of as she's scratching her head. It's jealousy, it's as fierce as the grave. It is the very flame of the Lord and it's interesting that the first time in this book we get the covenant name of God there, L-O-R-D in capital letters and it's a reference to the promise making God.

So she's referring there to the fact that this God does not change, He never changes and likewise this love will not change. many waters cannot quench it or take it away or floods drown it so the best fire brigade team in the world can't put out the fire of their love and you can't buy this kind of love either even if a man emptied his savings account and was all geared up to hit send and a bank transfer of everything that he had to try and purchase this kind of love for himself, what she's saying is it would be futile because you can't buy this kind of love.

Maybe there's a way of reading this as well when maybe you consider verses 11 and 12 and that's kind of a reference there to Solomon and his approach to sex and the mention of Baal there if you see it is suggesting in contrast to the Lord Baal just this idol that's taking God's people away from him it's suggestive of the fact that it's not a good thing.

Maybe there's a sense of which she's saying no amount of money in the world would convince me to walk away from this kind of love. Do you see how verse 12 just see it she says my own vineyard is mine to give so this kind of love is not something that I think you could say there at verse 8 and 9 her predictive brothers are going to usher her into it's not something that Solomon's going to buy from her this is something she's an independent woman she is saying my vineyard which is a metaphor for her body my vineyard is mine to give do you see that?

So this love that I have nothing will tear me away from it. Remember that show Deal or No Deal well here she is telling Noel Edmonds no deal.

[9 : 24] And so bring all those similes bring all those metaphors bring all those longings bring all those comparisons in her song together what is she saying about their love first of all it's permanent second of all it's priceless and we all long for the kind of love that she describes here don't we we all long for that kind of love that's permanent that's priceless it's why the official music video to Ed

Sheeran song Perfect when I checked it the other day on YouTube it presented me with a number that was so large that I actually had to take the number copy and paste it and put it into Google to tell me what it was in words because it was just so many digits and if you're wondering it's just short of four billion views that that music video has since it came out seven years ago only goes to show that we all long for a love that is both permanent and priceless a love that will last forever a love like this but it raises the question doesn't it and she's raised it in her song how secure is all of this particularly if they are in their old age let's run with that theory for a minute if they are in their old age they know what's around the corner how secure is all of this because once the enchanted spell of the

Disney like ending has worn off and we touch back down onto planet reality as wonderful as this is they know that there is someone who is out to put a full stop into their relationship sentence someone who is a hundred percent guaranteed to succeed and we've heard about him already in her song because she's right isn't she that there is nothing as certain and permanent as death and you can attempt to recreate that scene from Titanic where Jack and Rose are floating on the water as the Titanic sinks behind them and you can sing along with Celine Dion and believe that your heart will go on and you can sing it till you're hoarse but at the end of the day that is shallow and short-lived comfort when we feel the sting of being separated from love you know we've talked about in this series all the way along about turning down the world's song and turning up the song of God see when it comes to this friends I've been to enough humanist funerals in my time to know that those feelings that love will go on that memories will last they are shallow and short-lived and God in his word wants to give us something so much better so much more permanent something so much more priceless to base our lives upon because there is nothing as final and as fixed as the grave right not so says

Jesus not so says Jesus you know one of my favorite scenes in the gospels and you can go home and read this in your own time if you want is we find it in Matthew 22 where a group of people called the Sadducees right we know one thing about the Sadducees they're so Sadducee and this will come on to explain why this group of Sadducees they come to quiz Jesus this new kid on the block with all his religious theories with all his wisdom his so-called wisdom they come to him to quiz him now the Sadducees are a group of people who view the world in a certain way we'll come on to it a minute but before we get on to the Sadducees here's what we need to see friends we all view the world in a certain way all view the world in a certain way this is what Christians call your world view we all put on a pair of spectacles every day and we look at the world and we interpret the world you know I was walking home with a fellow school parent about six months ago and we're walking up to King's Buildings from our school at Liberty primary and we're talking about life and we're talking about jobs and we're talking about the football and we're talking about holidays and we're talking about weekend activities and we're talking about hopes and aspirations for our kids and then they said of course but we're not religious and the conversation ended about ten seconds later as we parted and it suddenly occurred to me in that moment that I'd missed a massive evangelistic opportunity because you know what I should have said to get her to think I should have said yes you are I view the world in a certain way you view the world in a certain way I believe that life is all about something you believe life is all about something the only difference between you and I is that the glasses that I wear every day are Jesus shaped and so here's my confession as I was thinking about this passage today never miss those evangelistic conversational connecting points friends we all view the world in a certain way all view the world in a certain way the only question is is it right and will it hold what are you basing it on you know there was a survey of students recently a survey of serving students up and down the UK and apparently 74% of students around today who currently don't attend church said that they would be going up for going to church if a friend asked them well cool 74% do you know I think what I think that shows

I think it shows that there's a massive openness right now the likes perhaps of which there has never been in many of our lifetimes this group called the Sadducees they view the world a certain way and one of those things that they are massively sceptical about is this whole idea of resurrection it's this whole idea of physical life after death surely that is jack-in-the-bean stock stuff and the Sadducees they come to Jesus and they hit him with this ridiculous hypothetical scenario in Matthew 22 and the game they want to leave Jesus floundering they want to put him in the spot with a hypothetical situation that only goes to show the fact that he cannot answer it goes to show the ridiculous nature of this notion of life after death of a physical new creation so they want to leave

Jesus scratching his head which if you know anything about

[16:19] Jesus is a very dangerous game to play and here's the scenario they come to Jesus and they say suppose a woman is married to a man you following it suppose a woman is married to a man well suppose that man dies and as would have been the Old Testament custom of the day that man's brother steps in to marry the woman to keep the line going got it right this is always where I lose the plot in the scenario okay but suppose that man dies and another brother steps in and suppose that brother dies and another brother steps in and it keeps going on and on and on until we're at the seventh brother and then they go for the checkmate and they say to Jesus but suppose now that the woman dies at this resurrection that you speak of which brother's wife will she be and they think rock hard place

Jesus surely but don't underestimate Jesus he is beauty and wisdom personified and how he answers that question the scenario is the solution to our grave shaped conundrum Jesus says your question it only goes to show that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God because he is not the God of the dead he is the God of the living and it is a wonderful comfort this morning if you want to read in Matthew 22 just while we're here we'll stop it is one of the places in the Bible thing that we can say with confidence friends that when our loved ones die and they trust in Jesus they will go to be with him spiritually speaking before the new creation before Jesus comes back they will go to be with him one of the places you can go to make that argument but Jesus says that the resurrection they will neither marry nor be given in marriage and what he's saying in the broader context is that because there will only be one marriage in heaven and it's the marriage between him and his people the church there's only going to be one marriage in heaven you know always think about this friends the

Bible should be a three chapter book really really should be Genesis 1 and 2 God creates the world God creates human beings Genesis 3 Adam and Eve they rebel against God and that really should be game over game over for mankind but God in his grace despite the Old Testament story developing documenting how human beings have given God every reason possible to scrap project salvation God didn't but it's better than that God sent his son and his son willingly took on human flesh and entered a world of sinful rebels but it's better than that Jesus came desiring a bride desiring a people and desiring that this bride would be his and so the groom was the one who went to the cross and who gave up his life to save his bride and so

Jesus prayed the bride place of his blood friends our sin was nailed to the cross with him and in so doing he wiped away the guilty record and the sinful stains of his people meaning that if our trust is in him today that we can be forgiven and we can know and be made right with the living God but it's better than that God wanted more than just a marriage of convenience the father sent the son why it was all about freeing sinners and turning them into a bride who delights in his son the father wants us to feel the same way about his son as he does about his son and so by his spirit living in them he gave them new hearts complete with new desires that means that we can say we love you Lord Jesus there is none like you the discovery our astonished hearts make as we live the Christian life is that discipleship is an invitation to taste joy but it's better than that when he returns this Lord Jesus there will be a new creation just as like he walked out of that tomb dead now alive friends all one day all of creation will walk out there with him one day in the same way and so if our faith is in him we can know that what happened to Jesus is going to happen to us a beautified bride on that day when he returns a glorious groom a glorious wedding resurrection bodies and that great day stands irremovable in the future as the hope to which we're called when we will one day be free from the presence of sin and that is Fort Knox secure and today what this woman sings about here concerning the love that she knows and enjoys and rests in with her husband we can take her words and quite literally just put them on our mouths and sing them about our groom

[22:28] Jesus can you follow with me here in the text verse 6 friends Christ is the one who has written our names as a seal upon his heart you can know that today Christ is the one whose love is not just like the power of death Christ is a love that breaks the power of death Christ's jealousy his yearning that we would be his is not just like the grave actually it's so much more it bursts open the grave because his love for us is the love that's going to last truly truly that is the song of songs you know just as we close you know there was a romantic comedy film that was released back in 1989 it was called When Harry

Met Sally and the main character Harry had the strange personality quirk that showed itself in how he read a book and this was his famous line he says when I buy a book I read the last page first that

way in case I die before I finish I know how it ends and it turns out what is an annoying personality trait is actually a very sound bit of discipleship advice this morning God wants us to see the last page wants us to see the last page and we can base all of our lives on the truth as it were united to Jesus now but we can base all of our lives on the truth that we know the last page we know how the story ends this is our future with him can I try and apply this just as we close to some of us here today friends

I know that you're in a transitional season of life and what I mean by that is that you're leaving something that you know and you're stepping into something that you don't know as if your life was two columns if you imagine the known and the unknown is why I imagine it feels like your known column was really full and all of a sudden it feels like it is being depleted and the unknown column is going up and up and up and up and up and it's a scary place to be isn't it unknown it's why often when we speak to kids when we do the issue group at Liberty!

primary many of them will tell us that their favourite do with this kind of stuff is when your known column is at its max we know everything we know the teachers know the school know the playground know everything and all of a sudden when you move up to school it just goes that way many of us are at a transitional stage of life and that's really scary but if you're here today and your faith is in Jesus can I tell you something as scary as life feels right now here's two things that aren't on your unknown list number one your union with Jesus doesn't change you're united to him that is in your known column number two is your eternal future with him so scary as life gets as many things crop up in that unknown column there are two things that are not going to change and nothing absolutely nothing in all of life is going to sever you from

Jesus and his love for you and we can walk confidently into an unknown tomorrow knowing that that will never change is that not true is that not why we can take risks for the gospel is it not why we can contemplate moving out of our comfort zone is it not why we can think about having evangelistic conversations with our friends and taking a shot that God by his spirit will do something well above our imaginations see if the future is certain see if his love for us is sure as hard as it gets down here we can base our lives on the truth of his love for us and so let's finish this series then with just the words of Romans chapter 8 and let's just let me read these to you friend and take in the truth of these today because this is what Paul is saying in Romans if you want to track it through this is what he's saying in Romans is he climaxes almost his theological argument in this section what it means what does the gospel mean he says this for

[27 : 22] I'm convinced that neither death nor life that's what we've been thinking about this morning neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future nor any powers neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord friends that truly is the song of songs Christ and his abounding love for us so let me pray and then we'll stand and respond to this and sing a couple of songs as we close and so Father we just thank you for your love for us this morning and we thank you for the gospel truth that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus thank you that Romans chapter 8 starts a chapter that's all about no condemnation and it ends in no separation and so

Father particularly pray for us this morning for whom this has maybe been painful this has been hard this has brought back memories oh Lord may the comfort that's found in Jesus the fact that he is the one who will not break a bruised reed that he will not blow out a snuffing candle Father may him and his gospel today come with a renewed sweetness Father we just thank you for each other we thank you that we do not walk this Christian life alone and may today just be another day where we help each other remind each other of the greatness of our King and his love for us so Father we thank you for today we thank you for this series and the Song of Songs and we just commit it to you Father in Jesus name we pray!

Amen B