

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Studies in the Song of Solomon: Song of Solomon 5:2-7:9

In chapter five of this beautiful Old Testament book we come to the second time that the spouse is separated from her true lover, but this time, sadly her love has become cold and she has settled down in comfort without him. She then has to go through very painful experiences, set on by his expression of love to her, before she is recovered. During these experiences, the true state of her heart is brought out by the way she speaks about him to others, and when we come to chapter six we find the spouse and her lover both together again.

Looking at chapters like this helps us to see pictures of experiences we may go through in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the true lover of our souls. We see how He reacts to our coldness and what He does to draw us back to Himself.

Verses 2 and 3 describe the sad state that she has got into, "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them." She has taken her ease in circumstances where there was no room for him and she had made herself comfortable there. She has gone to sleep after having taken off her coat and shoes, but she was woken up by the sound of his voice reminding her of what she was to him and how deeply he loved her. But sadly, she seems indifferent to his call. She almost seems to accuse him of unreasonableness in expecting her to get up and dress and to open the door to him.

If we are honest, I think we will recognise a picture here of what happens to us sometimes in our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Many times we may get into places where the Lord Jesus would not go, and we are quite happy to be there. Just like Peter when he went into Pilate's judgement hall and sat and warmed himself at the fire. We very easily become more concerned with our own comfort and ease than His love and desire for us. Peter was brought to his senses by the Lord's look; here she is roused by the sound of his voice.

He was the first to become aware of her coldness, and immediately he acts towards recovery; he called to her. Let us be assured that when our hearts become cold towards the Lord Jesus that He is the first to become aware of it, but so great is His love to us that He will not rest until He has recovered us to Himself. In our chapter he has spent the night outside in the cold and wet, while she was taking her rest. Do we sufficiently realise that the Lord Jesus has been cast out by the world? When He was here, He had nowhere to rest His head. It is still the same today. We may get along quite happily in the world but that is only because we are not in His company. If we always lived consciously in the enjoyment of His love, we would find that we are strangers in this world with all its pleasures and sin, and cannot rest there and be at ease.

He not only called her but put his hand through the hole in the door. Verse 4 says, "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him." The sight of his hand made her get up and open the door but when she got there, he had gone but had left behind a vivid reminder of his love. "I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock."

The only way that our often-cold hearts can be moved towards the Lord Jesus is to be reminded of all that His love cost Him in suffering on the cross. If we could see His blessed hands, we would see also the print of the nails. If we reached out to Him, we would be reminded of the sweetness of His unchanging love that took Him into death for us. The Lord Jesus was perfectly aware of the tendency of our hearts to forget Him, when He instituted the Lord's Supper. This is the occasion when we can, every week, remember Him in His death. If you do not do this, do not be surprised if your heart becomes indifferent to the claims of Christ and you find yourself at ease in places where He would not come.

The Lord Jesus wants us to realise how much He feels our lack of love to Him and so it is necessary sometimes for us to be put into circumstances where the awfulness of life without Him comes home to us. So He withdraws Himself and leaves the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. We read in verse 6, "I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." He would have us experience what unrequited love feels like. Sometimes the only way

that we learn is by passing through circumstances in which we may drop so low as to wonder if the Lord Jesus is with us. We know that He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This is always true, but when my heart becomes cold towards Him, I will lose the sense of His company.

She speaks with anguish now for she had felt what is like to call to him and have no answer. Have you ever done that? Got really low in spirit, prayed hard but it seemed as though He was not listening? Look deeply into your own heart and see if He is everything to you and that you may have, for a while, lived as if He did not exist. We must learn what that feels like.

In these circumstances everything seems to be against us. In verse 7 she tries to find him. She is accosted by well meaning folk who misjudge her intentions. "The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me." The watchmen and the keepers of the walls would represent persons who have a responsibility to care for souls. They can only go by what they see. They cannot look into our hearts, so sometimes they may make mistakes. These people took the spouse for a woman of the city, finding her abroad at night. So they treated her as one. They thought her wearing a veil was a mockery and took it away from her. That veil meant that she was an espoused woman, but here she was wandering about the city alone at night.

How she would have felt this! How ashamed she would have been! She was beginning to realise the consequences of her coldness to her lover. What a picture this is! Think again of dear Simon Peter. What a moment it was when the awfulness of what he had done was realised by him! What anguish and sorrow of heart was his as he went out and wept bitterly for those three days!

But the spouse met others that dark night who did not abuse her. She almost seems to assume that they knew where he was. She speaks to them words that she would have loved to have said to him herself, but she had lost him. "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love." What a change was taking place in her heart! So different from the beginning of the chapter where she had forgotten him! Now her heart was full for him but she had lost him. How true it is that sometimes we do not realise the value of a thing until we lose it. So they ask her a question in verse 9, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved that thou dost so charge us?"

Whoever these people represent, they are those who, obviously know something about the Lord Jesus but count Him no more important than other people in their lives. So they do not understand her feelings. Sadly when we pass through chastisement at the Lord's hand, we may find even other Christians do not understand what we are passing through. Perhaps they have never had such experiences. But this draws out from her heart the most beautiful description of her lover. In pictorial language, it is probably the most beautiful description of the Lord Jesus that we have in the Old Testament. Only one who knows Him well can speak like this.

She first speaks of his being white and ruddy and then of his worthiness to be lifted up above every other rival. We read in verse 10, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." His whiteness reminds us that the Lord Jesus is the only One who can be described as the Holy One of God. The Apostle Peter tells us, "He did no sin." He could ask the crowd, "Which of you convinces me of sin?" The sinless perfection of His manhood is essential. But He is also ruddy. This would remind us of His devotion to God and the energy that always characterised His service. His being the chiefest among the thousands carries the idea of 'being lifted up as a banner'. He is the one who is surrounded by those who love Him and gladly give to Him the honour that He is worthy of.

"His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven." The Lord Jesus as a divine person is not only fully acquainted with the mind of God but able to give effect to all that was in the Father's heart from eternity. There is no ageing in Him. He will always be what He is; there will never be any evidence of age in Him. She likens his eyes to those of doves by rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set. We are told that the eyes are the most expressive feature of our faces. How true this is of the Lord Jesus. How His eyes saw every need of those around Him and often shed tears of compassion and understanding. Yet being fitly set would suggest that their estimation was always in accord with the mind of God.

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh." The number of scriptures that mention smiting on the cheek would seem to suggest that His cheeks would speak of the lowly grace of His that led Him to bear all the smiting and insults that were heaped upon Him. In those circumstances, His lips uttered to word of anger or reproof. Think of the pain as those terrible men in the judgement hall ripped His beard from His face and yet He never said a word! Peter tells us in his first epistle "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously: who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." 1 Peter 2:22-24.

In her description of him, the spouse in referring to his head, his hands and his feet speaks of gold. This would again remind us of the divine glory of His person though seen in a man. His head can completely take in every divine

thought. His hands are strong enough to carry out everything for God's pleasure and nothing can ever move that which is established by His feet.

But in describing His belly or bowels, it being the same word, she refers to ivory and sapphires. "His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires." The bowels in the scriptures always speak of the depth of inward feeling, both of the Saviour and the saints. Frequently we read of the Lord Jesus being 'moved with compassion' when He saw the distress all around Him. How He felt deeply within Himself not only what the sufferer was passing through, but more than this, He expressed what the heart of God was feeling. We, as Christians, have to learn this if we are going to be effective in sympathising with others.

The spouse five times refers to white or things that are white in her description of him. His overall bearing being white, his eyes washed with milk, his lips like lilies, his belly like ivory and his legs like marble. Every feature of Christ is pure. No taint of sin mars anything about Him. He is completely suitable to God. The growing of ivory is the cause of great pain to the animal. The compassions of Jesus were the cause of great sorrow to Him and led to the acute suffering of death on the cross. He is called the 'Man of Sorrows'. But the blue of the sapphire would remind us that His feelings were not mere human sentiment, but were the feelings of heaven.

His legs and his feet being "as pillars of marble; set upon sockets of fine gold" would again remind us not only of the righteousness and purity of wherever He went or whatever He did but that all was done on the basis of what was according to God's will. At the end of verse 15, she seems to stand back and take an admiring view of his whole person, "His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars." The cedar is a very stately tree and stands out amongst the trees for this. How the Lord Jesus stands out from all others. There is none to compare with the excellency of His person.

But her description is not complete without her mentioning his mouth. This seems to suggest that she had known intimacy with him. She had previously spoken about his kisses, and here, before she finished, she refers to the ultimate enjoyment she had experienced in their love together. "Yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." There is no part of him that she does not admire, and speaks of him as her beloved and friend. We do well to ask ourselves if we know anything at all about the person and love of Christ to be able to speak about Him like this?

The beginning of chapter 6 shows us the effect that her description of her lover has upon others. "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee." These daughters of Jerusalem were so attracted to him that they wanted to find him as well. How true it is that the best way to attract others to Christ is to be able to show them that He means everything to us. If they can see that our hearts are full of His beauties and glories, then what we say about Him will be more effective.

Then in the second verse she seems, without being told, to know where he is. "My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." She had been looking for him in the wrong places; she had to learn that he would only be found in places that were suitable to him. This is often very true of us often. We may go through very painful experiences if we think we can find Christ in places that are not according to His will. She realises that he will only be at rest in places of harmlessness and simplicity where there is nothing to reproach, and so she finds him. She speaks of how much she is to him and then of what he is to her. What a blessed moment it is when we yield completely to the Lord Jesus, realising how precious we are to Him! So much so that He not only gave everything for us, but Himself also. And then to have Him as our absorbing portion even now, as we will throughout eternity. She says, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies."

In the rest of this chapter he speaks of her beauty and attractiveness to him. They are together again in all the intimacy of undisturbed love and affection. She has passed through much painful exercise but it has only produced in her features that are attractive to him. May we learn that often the dark parts of our lives are those that, through exercise and prayer, produce in us that which the Lord Jesus appreciates.

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