

The Bridal Seal of Mature Love

INTRODUCTION

We position our hearts before You. Abba, we make our spirit vulnerable to You. Come and strike us with a divine spark. Come and release that progressive seal of divine fire upon our hearts. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Session 19: The Bridal Seal of Mature Love:

“Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I awakened you under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth; there she who bore you brought you forth. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised” (Song 8:5-7)

THE BRIDE WILL LEAN AND LOVE AT THE END OF NATURAL HISTORY

The Holy Spirit is preparing the Bride to have a loving and a leaning heart. This is one of the great, glorious accomplishments in the grace of God of people in this age. To have a leaning heart and a loving heart is of the highest magnitude of supernatural power. The human heart is so prone to opposite dispositions outside of the grace of God. It requires the supernatural power of God to produce in the people of God a loving and a leaning heart.

This is a summary of the purpose of the whole journey in this book. It’s summarized in this sentence: “having a leaning and a loving heart.” She is leaning and loving at the end of history. At the end of natural history, God has a bride. The first commandment has been restored to first place. She is walking in apostolic weakness, and this voluntary weakness of leaning upon the Lord. At the end of natural history God will have a victorious Church that leans and loves. Throughout church history, God has had those individual tokens of what will happen in a widespread way at the end of the age. These men and women have emerged as bright lights throughout church history with a leaning and loving heart.

HOW DO WE DEFINE SUCCESS ON EARTH?

I believe it’s fair to say that we can define a successful life on the earth inasmuch as we’ve grown with a leaning and a loving heart before Christ Jesus. That’s the clearest definition of success that any person can have: that they would have the first commandment restored to first place, and that they would walk in the voluntary weakness of a heart that consciously decides to lean upon the Lord. One main purpose of her journey was to learn how to walk in these two kingdom dynamics. Again, these two define spiritual success, which in essence defines all success of earthly life. It comes to a culmination in these three verses. These three verses define success. They define the goal of Christian living on the earth. They define where God is going to bring the end-time church.

THE SEALED HEART IS AN OVERFLOWING HEART

The Holy Spirit’s prophetic declaration of the Bride’s victory is how it starts. This produces hope in the Bride. Jesus reminds her of her past journey. This produces gratitude in her. “He awakened her under the apple tree,”

is the phrase (Song 8:5, paraphrased). Then Jesus is manifested as our bridal seal. He releases His power upon her emotions.

The great reward of the bridal seal is this: she is filled with spiritual pleasure and spiritual satisfaction. She has an overflowing heart. The sealed heart is an overflowing heart. The sealed heart is a fully romanced heart in the Holy Spirit. She has a heart that's walking in the great reward. She has spiritual pleasure and satisfaction unrelated to earthly circumstances, which means she is finally free.

THE LIBERTY OF THE ROMANCED HEART

When we overflow in joy unrelated to circumstances, we're free at last. We'll all have an overflowing heart, free of earthly circumstances, when we're in eternity. Throughout history God has had His servants like Paul the apostle, men and women who have touched this ultimate liberty while in this age. I believe the Church at the end of the age will walk in this spiritual pleasure unrelated to natural circumstances. They will know the liberty of the romanced heart.

Paul said it in Philippians 4: "I have learned the secret: I am content in all things" (Phil. 4:11-12, paraphrased). In prosperity and in pressure, his heart overflowed in love. Prosperity didn't disrupt him, and neither did pressure. He learned the secret of life on planet earth in the Holy Spirit: entering into the sealed heart, the overflowing heart, and the fully romanced heart, which makes us free at last.

A SEA OF GLASS LIKE CRYSTAL, MINGLED WITH FLAMING FIRE

I should have added here that in Revelation 15 the Bride stands on the sea of glass like crystal, mingled with flaming fire (Rev. 15:2). The sealed heart in divine fire culminates with the Bride standing on a sea of fire. She's singing the song of the Lamb, and she has overcome the great flood of Satan's rage. We'll look at that very language as we develop this session. In Revelation 15:2, she is in full victory in the fire of God, overcoming the floods that couldn't quench the fire of her heart. She is fully victorious over Satan and filled with emotional power.

This is Jesus' gift to His Bride: that we would live with an overflowing heart on the earth. We can't come to Jesus and have Him touch us without it significantly making us better in every area we gave to Him that was initially sacrificial and costly. We come to Him, we sacrificially give, and we walk away with ten times more than that which we sacrificed. His gift to the spiritually violent, fully-romanced Bride is a heart overflowing in love on the earth, free from all earthly circumstances, filled with love.

THE GREATEST GIFT GOD GIVES HIS PEOPLE IN THIS AGE

People talk a lot about the price they pay. When we look at the end of this Session 19, we'll see that the very power to love and the joy of feeling loved and the joy of loving back is the greatest gift God gives His people in this age. It's so much greater than any sacrifice that we could ever make.

"WHO IS THIS COMING UP FROM THE WILDERNESS?"

This is the Holy Spirit's prophetic declaration: "Who is this coming up from the wilderness?" The Holy Spirit gives a prophetic proclamation of the Bride's final victory. He's producing hope in the Bride ahead of time. As the Holy Spirit looks over human history, He asks the rhetorical question, "Who is this that has persevered through tribulations unto a mature bride? Who is this with a loving and a leaning heart, coming up out of history?" The Holy Spirit is prophesying her inevitable victory. The inevitable victory of the corporate church

coming out of natural history is that she will be victorious (Rev. 15:2). Again, I believe Revelation 15:2-4 is directly related to Song of Solomon 8:5-7. It would be very edifying to compare the two passages together.

THE WILDERNESS FROM WHICH THE BRIDE ASCENDS IN VICTORY

The Bride endures the pressures of a fallen world. “Who is this coming up from the wilderness?” The wilderness in a personal sense speaks of our testing, temptations, and difficulties in this life as God training us in righteousness. The wilderness in a general sense speaks of a fallen world that’s filled with sinful human beings under the influence of Satan. Galatians 1:4 calls it this “present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul calls Satan the god of this world. This world, this dark evil age, is a wilderness from which the Bride will ascend in victory.

The Bride’s victory is over all obstacles. “Who is this coming up. . .?” It’s the words “coming up” that we want to highlight. The Holy Spirit sees the people of God coming up in victory through the wilderness. She comes up. She isn’t descending; she is ascending in victory. She didn’t quit; she’s ascending. She’s coming up in victory through the time of tribulation and testing on the earth. You won’t quit. The end-time church won’t quit. There will be no reason to quit. The Lord will woo her in power with the seal of fire upon her heart. She will come up victorious. You won’t quit; you will come up victorious.

“Coming up” also speaks of ascending at the second coming or the resurrection from a fallen world to enter the eternal city. The Bride was urged by Jesus to rise up and to go with Him to the mountains. In fear she refused, but now she rises up to go to the mountains. However, we find out that it’s the mountain of spices she’s ascending. She’s ascending to the mountain He called her to ascend back in chapter 2, but now to her great delight it’s the mountain of spices that she’s ascending. It’s the full glory of God that she’s ascending. That’s the destination to which she’s ascending. The Bride is motivated and empowered by love and gratitude. She is leaning upon her Beloved.

ANYONE CAN QUIT EXCEPT FOR A PERSON IN LOVE

The divine love released and imparted is the only way that we won’t quit in the wilderness. Anyone can quit except for a person in love. Anyone can quit except for a person in love. A person in love can’t quit; they have no choice. The very power of the love in their heart gives them no options to quit. You won’t quit. You will have no need to quit. God is about to release a greater measure of the seal of fire. That seal of fire begins at the new birth.

IT’S THE REVELATION OF HER WEAKNESS THAT CAUSES HER TO LEAN

She fully embraces weakness as she acknowledges Jesus as her only life goal and her only life source. She is “leaning upon her Beloved.” This speaks of the apostolic weakness that Paul embraced. It speaks of being committed to a life of voluntary weakness, and the fasted lifestyle. It’s voluntary weakness that causes her to lean. It’s weakness that’s rooted in conviction and revelation. It’s the revelation of her weakness that causes her to lean.

You say, “Well, that sounds pretty obvious.”

No, because the Body of Christ is indescribably weak in the natural, and yet so few of the members of the Body of Christ lean aggressively into the heart of God. We still live and count on and have confidence in our own

resources. The fasted lifestyle is a statement of poverty. It's a statement that says, "I don't have sufficient resources. I have no option but to lean because I see how poor and how weak I am."

Weakness, voluntary weakness, is the fruit of revelation. A praying man or woman is a person who has the revelation. They're bankrupt, so they pray. They have no resource. Only weak people pray; strong people don't have any need to pray. Only weak people pray, because they have no confidence to face the future without drawing on divine resource. Only weak people fast. Only weak people give, because they need the Lord's involvement in their money. They have no confidence to go forward without supernatural involvement. Only weak people draw with this fierce, tenacious, holy resolution unto the resource of God. The phrase I'm using is the phrase, "apostolic weakness." It's voluntary weakness.

John the apostle leaned upon Jesus' breast as a prophetic picture of the end-time church fulfilling this loving and leaning heart. The Lord promises His Son a bride with a leaning heart of loyal love that doesn't stray in seasons of prosperity or adversity.

IT'S IN THE PLACE OF PROSPERITY THAT WE LEAN THE LEAST

The history of God's people reveals that we don't often lean and love in the midst of blessing. It's in the place of prosperity where God's people lean the least. In the place of circumstantial strength, of natural strength, we lose our awareness of our weakness. We tend to do more and to run in the strength of natural resource. And while natural resource may be abundant, natural resource is insufficient. It may be abundant, but the deception is that abundant natural resource makes us strong. Abundant natural resource leaves us deceived and therefore more prone to live stumbling than those with the revelation of their weakness. That's why it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom (Mt. 19:23), because a rich man has a secret confidence in the ability and the power of his riches to help him if he gets in big trouble. It's difficult for people to walk in revelation with natural resource, to believe in their ultimate weakness, though they have natural strengths. A person endowed with great intelligence or finance or any kind of abilities, or even a prosperous ministry, tends to avoid drawing strength from leaning fiercely and tenaciously upon the Lord. They begin to have confidence even in the position of strength that the Lord has granted them.

The need and the value of leaning is what I discuss here. It's very rare, but it will be common in the end-time church. I talk about how the prosperous quit leaning. It's the principle I just developed. These are some of the ways in which we lean upon Jesus. There are several that I don't have on this list; it's not comprehensive.

JESUS WANTS A BRIDE WHO VOLUNTARILY REMAINS IN WEAKNESS

I want to talk about voluntary apostolic weakness. Jesus wants a bride who voluntarily remains in weakness as she feels the power of the Spirit upon her. This is how Jesus walked when He was on the earth. He had the power of God available and flowing through Him, but He would never move out in anything that was not the perfect will of the Father. He said no to His own will and lived in perfect resolve to the Father. He wouldn't draw on anything but the resource of the Spirit. His own will He laid aside. She voluntarily chooses to submit her strengths or her resources to the Holy Spirit in weakness rather than using them to establish her in strength in natural things.

Again, this might sound a bit like, "Huh, I never thought much about that." It's a very, very significant principle. If you remember, chapters 7 and 8 are about leadership principles, or apostolic leadership. Voluntary weakness means consciously submitting to a place of weakness out of conviction before God. For example, the

fasted lifestyle is voluntarily submitting to weakness. Again, you only pray if you believe you're weak. Ministries or believers that don't prioritize prayer are ministries or believers that don't believe they're weak deep in their heart. Only weak people pray; only weak people fast. Usually, only weak people sustain giving in the manner in which the Lord has invited them to give. It's because we don't have confidence to go forward outside of the strength of God. Our joy is to live in the strength of God. To live in the strength of God, we have to say no to natural strength.

THE INSIDIOUS SNARE OF VOLUNTARY STRENGTH

Let's take the opposite concept: voluntary strength. I don't have it written here. It means viewing our resources as belonging primarily to us. Voluntary strength is the opposite of voluntary weakness. It's when we view our natural resources as belonging primary to us, so that we can use them at our discretion instead of yielding them to the Lord; so that we can take advantage of any opportunity that's not unrighteous and evil and say yes to it. Paul the apostle understood that he belonged to the Lord. Even his own strengths in the natural he wouldn't use apart from his relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Bride sees her strengths as this, which can often hinder her in her deep life in the Holy Spirit.

THE EVER-PRESENT DANGER OF OPERATING IN OUR OWN STRENGTH

I realize a few of you are still working this out. Well, just keep working on it. I have a bit more in the notes here. I'll give you a verse that says it as clear as any place in the Scriptures. This speaks of the apostolic weakness that Paul embraced. He said, "Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations" (2 Cor. 12:7). In other words, "Lest because of the abundance of the anointing of the Lord upon me, I begin to operate in my own human pride." That's natural strength. "I began to move out of the place of consciously leaning, and I began to use my powerful gift of revelation to open doors and to get the job done"—as though the revelation belonged to him!

Operating in our strength is so common that it's difficult even to imagine what the Church would look like if she consciously submitted to weakness as a conviction. It's called feeling the power of God, but not using the millions that come when the power of God is available to you; feeling the power of God, and multitudes of people will follow your every word, wherever you beckon, but never using it to lead them anywhere but to the Lord. It means having tremendous anointing and influence, and never using it to stand against those who oppose you as your enemies, but blessing them in intercession; never using your clout and your position of influence and prestige to stop them. It's those kinds of things that I'm talking about. When the Spirit of the Lord is upon a man or a woman in an unusual way, the finances, the authority over people, and the doors that open are tremendous.

God is going to have a Church that doesn't view those circumstances of blessing as part of the strength that they live out of. It's the apostle who in the power of God has a million people following him, and who can be rebuked by a new believer, or can be challenged and attacked by someone with no clout, and they'll never use carnal means to stop it. It's that kind of thing I'm talking about. It's called apostolic weakness.

The Bride is leaning on the Lord. She says, "Lord, I could in many ways solve many problems, but I won't solve them by the arm of the flesh. Let the enemies rage against me." What would happen in the Body of Christ if the servants of the Lord used prayer and kindness to defuse their enemies? It might take ten or twenty years to stop them, and they may never be stopped, but the power of God would be abundant and would flow. That's what I mean by weakness.

“MY STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS”

Paul said, “Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me . . . Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness’” (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

There’s the revelation: His strength is made perfect when we consciously stay in a place of weakness. When you stay there, living in intercession is submitting to weakness. Living in fasting is submitting to weakness. Blessing those who oppose you is living in conscious weakness. He says, “My power will be perfect if you’ll stay submitted voluntarily to weakness.”

“THEREFORE MOST GLADLY I WILL RATHER BOAST IN MY INFIRMITIES”

Paul says, and this is a stunning revelation, “Therefore, most gladly I boast”—or *rejoice*—“in the realm of this lifestyle of staying within the sphere of weakness and not using my strength to remove my problems” (2 Cor. 12:9b, paraphrased).

It’s a delicate thing to talk about. The “most gladly” Paul is talking about is a voluntary decision here. In many ways I shouldn’t bring this up in the course of the Song of Solomon, but I need to bring it up because it’s here. The irresponsible say, “Therefore, I won’t go and get a job and I won’t work. I’ll just let the Lord pay all my bills.” That’s not what I’m talking about. I’m talking about having the availability of resource and staying in the boundary lines of the Holy Spirit and not using the resources, though it’s ours because it’s available to us. I believe God is going to raise up men and women who, by the anointing of the Lord, will fill the stadiums of the earth, and millions of dollars will be available to them. They won’t touch it but to minister to the poor and release the gospel. They will live simple lifestyles. They will stay in the boundary of weakness, consciously, voluntarily, in order that the gospel would go forth. That’s what I’m talking about right here.

PAUL HAD A LEANING AND A LOVING HEART

Paul the apostle was such a magnificent, shining light as a man who had such power at his disposal. He had multitudes he could marshal if he wished: tremendous economics and tremendous intellectual abilities. Yet the Holy Spirit held him in check and kept him in boundary lines. He said, “Paul, if you stay in these boundary lines, though you might look foolish, more will happen for the glory of God.” Paul was one of those examples of history, one who had a leaning heart as well as a loving heart. It’s very contrary to nature.

AS A MAN JESUS LIVED IN THE BOUNDARY LINES OF WEAKNESS

I outline some of the ways in which we voluntarily embrace weakness. In weakness I’m not talking about sinfulness. I’m talking about putting ourselves in a position where we don’t use power to triumph over others when the power is available to us. That’s what I’m talking about right there. Jesus, of course, is the ultimate example: the God of such indescribable wealth walking on the earth with no place to lay His head; One who was born in a manger, who was cursed and ridiculed by the nation, but He wouldn’t correct that except in the timing of God. And He will correct it when He stands in the sky in flaming fire with all the angels on the last day. As a man Jesus lived in the boundary lines of weakness. The Sermon on the Mount is a lifestyle of weakness. When your enemies rage against you and you can solve the issue and you bless them instead, that’s apostolic weakness. That’s weakness at its finest: to have the answer and not use it.

David had Saul at the end of a spear (1 Sam. 24 and 26). He said, “Far be it from me to touch you.” Twice he said, “Yes, I can kill you, but that’s not the Lord’s way. The Lord will get rid of you. I won’t use my resource to get rid of you.” That’s what I’m talking about.

HE HAS PROVIDED THE BRIDE WITH LIFELONG REFRESHMENT

Jesus reminds her of her past journey. He’s awakening gratitude. That’s the power of the Bride in eternity. I believe it’s the unrelenting gratitude from her understanding of her life on the earth. We will understand our life on the earth when we’re in eternity in a way that produces gratitude in our hearts, which becomes one of the main sources of our loyal love forever. It’s gratitude. I don’t believe when we step into eternity that the Lord makes sure that we never say no to Him. But the power of gratitude will be fueled. He awakens gratitude. He reminds her of her history, of her beginning, when He awakened her and refreshed her under the apple tree. It’s the Lord reminding her of what He did. He has provided the Bride with lifelong refreshment on the earth, and she is grateful. She lives in the overflow of the gratitude that God awakened in her, and with which He refreshed her when she had no knowledge of Him. It’s the Lord revealing His goodness to her all along, and the power of gratitude is what this is talking about.

JESUS INVITES HER TO TAKE HIM AS THE SEAL ON HER HEART

Jesus is our bridal seal. Jesus is speaking: “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame” (Song 8:6). Divine love is as strong and unrelenting as the grave. The jealousy of God won’t take no for an answer, just as the grave won’t take no for an answer. Jesus invites her to set Him as a seal upon her heart. “Set Me as a seal.” Jesus is the bridal seal. He’s the One who seals the heart of the Bride. He gives her the romanced heart, the sealed heart, the overflowing heart. Jesus is extending an invitation to her to take Him as the seal on her heart. Her journey started with a longing for His kisses and it ends up with a seal of love upon her heart. She begins with a longing for kisses, a longing for intimacy, and it ends with a sealed heart, a romanced heart, an overflowing heart.

THE POWER OF HIS KINGDOM BACKS UP THAT WHICH HE SEALS

In the ancient world, a royal document, such as a title deed or a military strategy, was authenticated by a royal seal. A royal seal was a wax seal. The title deed was a royal document sent, for example, from one king to another. The king would encase the document in wax and put his seal upon it. The seal functioned as a signature. This encased document, in the form of a scroll, was rolled up in wax. It was encased in an inch of wax all the way around with the royal seal upon it, and that seal was well-known to the neighboring kings and nations. The seals of the wealthy were known; their signatures were known. A sealed document spoke of the king’s ownership, protection, and authority. The king’s army protected the king’s seal. If the seal was broken, everyone who was carrying the seal was executed. The entire power of the empire was behind that seal, and guaranteed the contents of that which was sealed. I develop that a bit more on pages 11 and 12.

Go to page 12. When the Lord seals the heart, the divine guarantee is behind the seal. The power of His kingdom backs up that which He seals. The divine source of the bridal seal is a seal of fire that He puts on the hearts of His people. “Its flames are flames of fire.” It’s a seal made not of wax, but of divine fire. The seal is none other than the power of Jesus released by the Holy Spirit. It’s the fire of God on the human heart. “Its flames are flames of fire.” It’s the Father’s love empowering sinful human hearts to love Jesus.

THE FLAME OF THE LORD, THE MOST POWERFUL FLAME THAT EXISTS

Jesus prayed in John 17:26, “Father, supernaturally release the love that You have for Me into them. Make them recipients of the love You have for Me. Supernaturally impart into them the love that You feel towards Me, Father” (Jn. 17:26, paraphrased). That was what Jesus was praying. It takes God to love God. Jesus is asking the Father to impart His own quality of love into the human spirit. It’s the very fire of God: a “most vehement flame.” As I say in the notes, it’s the most powerful flame that can exist. There’s no flame more powerful. According to the Hebrew, it’s the very flame of God Himself. I have that written out there. This is the source of the bridal seal. “Its flames are flames of fire.” This fire of love manifests itself by tenderizing our hearts so that we feel some of what the Father feels when He looks at His Son. Our hearts are by nature hard, dull, and insensitive to the things that God feels in His emotional makeup. There’s nothing more precious and pleasant to us than to be empowered to feel what the Father is feeling when He gazes upon His Son. That’s the fire of God, the very flame of God Himself imparted to the human spirit.

WE GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH BY FLASHES OF HIS FIRE

The NASB translates *flames* as “flashes of fire.” I love that! God’s fire flashes in the human heart. A flash of fire comes powerfully, suddenly, and soon wanes until the next flash comes. That’s descriptive of how the Lord leads us in this life. There are those moments when the flash of God’s presence engulfs our hearts, and it empowers us. Then the Lord allows the feeling to diminish. Then again He comes like a flash of fire to empower us. We go from strength to strength that way. There are times when He tenderizes us suddenly as a flash of fire. Then, as suddenly as it comes, it seems to leave. Our hearts wait with great anticipation for the next visit of His flashing, tenderizing fire. It’s the very flash of God’s fire when it comes, but over the months and years we’re steadily going from strength to strength in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the seal. This seal is our heavenly King’s seal. It isn’t the wax seal of an earthly king; it’s the seal of fire of a divine king by the Holy Spirit. Solomon, the king writing this love song, understands the waxed seal of an earthly king. He had a waxed seal: he sealed documents with his royal insignia and the royal seal was placed on the wax. This seal operates as the person of the Holy Spirit releasing the power of Jesus. The seal is none other than the person of Jesus released by the Holy Spirit.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD FROM A HEART THAT SAYS, “I LOVE YOU”

“Set Me,” Jesus says. “Set Me.” How do we do that? We do it by setting our hearts before God. There is no mystery.

Again, people ask me all the time, “How do you do it?”

I say, “Really there’s no mystery. It’s costly and it takes time, but it isn’t confusing.” You do it one day at a time, and you set your heart before the Lord by filling it with the Word of God in a devotional prayer context. In the very first session we handed out a way to pray-read the Word. To pray-read the Word means you fill your heart. You put fuel into your heart. It’s the *logos*, the Word of God. You fill your heart with the Word of God in a devotional posture. That’s key. You read it with an attitude of, “I love You.” I appreciate the student mode. I’m in the student mode plenty of times. It’s where I’m studying, researching, and trying to understand with my mind. The student mode is a good mode. But a student mode isn’t sufficient to set your heart on fire. It’s the lover mode; it’s the bridal mode; it’s the mode of romance. It’s the meditation on the Word of God in the posture of heart that says, “I love You.” It’s reading it and turning the Word into conversation that enhances the romance between you and the Lord.

Again, in the first session I laid it out in a page or two. It's a very simple way to pray-read the Word. It's costly; it takes time. It takes time in the course of the day and the week. It takes time in the sense that it's sometimes months and years before we understand the discernible difference. Those months and years will come and go. As a matter of fact, they'll come or go whether you fill your heart with the Word or not. They still come and go.

People say, "I can't wait that long."

I say, "Well, you're going to anyway; I promise you." It's costly in terms of time in the sense that it takes us time in the day and it takes us time in that marathon pace. It's like I tell people: "Lock into a ten-year mode. In ten years if your heart isn't romanced then you might have a valid complaint, but that's impossible."

THE POWER THAT TENDERIZES US IS THE POWER OF GOD

How do you set the Lord before you? By setting your heart before the Lord. That's how we set the Lord before us: we take the Word of God and put it into our hearts in a devotional posture. You're putting a bulls-eye in your heart. You're putting your cold heart before the bonfire of God. That's how you set Him upon your heart.

There's no other seal besides "Jesus" in the present tense. The importance of cooperating with the Holy Spirit is with the posture of soul or heart that's reaching to Jesus for fellowship. Make time to interact with Him in His Word. Prayer and fasting isn't the seal. Jesus touching the heart is the seal, or the Holy Spirit, or God, touching the heart. Let's just say it that way.

Spiritual disciplines increase our capacities to receive from God to become tenderized. The power that tenderizes us is the power of God and not the spiritual disciplines that place us in a position to receive the power of God. The spiritual disciplines don't change us; they posture us to receive. The very essence, the very substance of God's power and life is what changes us. The spiritual disciplines posture us to receive the free empowering of the Lord upon the heart. Some people think there's something magical about spiritual disciplines. It's the Spirit that has power and not the disciplines. The disciplines simply posture us. The discipline is the activity we exert to get in front of the fire, but it's the fire that warms the heart. It isn't the energy and the activity to get in front of the fireplace; it's the fire that warms you. The disciplines simply posture us before the Lord to receive the fire of God in the cold heart. The disciplines are essential, because as raging as that fireplace might be, if you don't exert the energy to get in front of it, then it isn't going to warm you. Spiritual disciplines in themselves have no power. They only bring us into the presence of the power. They act as a catalyst to receive more quickly.

THE FLAME OF THE LORD IS THE SEAL OF GOD

The seal of the heart speaks of the way we carry our heart, or the way we identify and define our lives. Our past victories aren't the seal. The great miracle the Lord used when you laid hands on someone; the great prophecy, or vision, or the great release of the power of the Lord where ten or twenty people met the Lord in a small period of time, or a great victory over a difficulty or temptation in our lives, is not the seal. The seal on your heart isn't your past record of failure, either. Some people posture their hearts according to their mistakes when they come before the Lord. The way they carry their heart is, "Lord, I sinned in this, this, this, and this." They live as though their record of failures is what's sealing their heart when they come before God. That's not our seal. I don't come before the Lord boasting of what I've accomplished in the grace of God. Nor do I come before the Lord lamenting everything I did wrong in the past. I come before the Lord with a cold heart and say,

“You, Your fire, is what I need.” I don’t even bring that other stuff. The fire is the seal, and not those other things. The reason I’m saying this is that so many people allow the counterfeit seals or religious seals to block their hearts from receiving.

THIS SEAL OF FIRE IS RELEASED PROGRESSIVELY

This one is an equally painful one. To some people their seal is their future promises. Some people define their whole life by their future expectations that one day they’ll be anointed. There’s such agonizing pain today because the anointing that God has promised them never comes and they can never enjoy God today. They’re in so much anguish over the anointing. It’s going to come and then it never comes. The Lord says, “I’m here in front of you as a flaming fire, and you’ve blocked your heart with a seal, another seal besides My Son.” It’s the seal of what you’re believing about the future. It’s important to believe right things about the future. But when what we believe about the future blocks our hearts from receiving the fire of God in the present, then it has become a religious seal that blocks our hearts.

This seal of fire is a progressive seal. The progressive seal begins at the new birth. It isn’t like you go to a meeting and one day it’s over. I don’t believe in that. I believe we’re sealed the day we’re born again (Eph. 1:13). The release of that seal in our human experience increases progressively. I believe the Lord is going to release a tremendous amount at the end of the age. It’s a twofold seal: a seal upon the heart and a seal upon the arm. It’s a seal on the heart, and that speaks about God supernaturally empowering, warming, and tenderizing the affections. The seal of fire tenderizes and warms the heart. The seal of fire empowers the arm, which speaks of our labors or our ministries. That’s the seal upon the arm. The seal on the heart is the first commandment. The seal upon the arm is the second commandment. It’s the arm of labor; it’s the arm of ministry.

THE LABOR OF THE LEADERS ISN’T SEALED WITH THE FIRE OF GOD

I want you to read this: “When the Lord seals our arm, it’s important, but not now.” Basically, the Lord wants us to conduct ministry in such a way that our ministry is sealed by the fire of God. When we do that, our ministry doesn’t burn us out. Many people are burned out and lose their love in God, their first love, while in the very rigors of ministry. He wants to seal our labors in the fire to where we grow in love instead of diminishing in love by laboring in the Lord’s vineyard. Right now, burnout in ministry across the Western world is really at an all-time high in the last several hundred years. The chronic level of burnout, discontent, disappointment, anger, and pain in the leadership of the Body of Christ in the Western world is deeply serious. The labor of the leaders isn’t sealed with the fire of God; it diminishes their love rather than enhancing it. And I talk about that.

WE DON’T WANT BIG MINISTRIES WITH SMALL HEARTS

Not only is the arm sealed meaning our love is enhanced, but we make new discoveries in the Lord while ministering in the proper balance in the Holy Spirit. What that means is this: we can’t take every opportunity in ministry and do everything and live without burning our hearts out. What we need is a sealed arm. We need ministries operating under the fiery seal of God. Not only do we need to find new discoveries of the love of God in our own heart while we’re ministering, but the Lord wants our arm of ministry to impart the love of God to others and to awaken other people to the first commandment. The Lord wants ministries that set other people on fire in passion for Jesus. It’s the sealed arm. The last thing we want is religious bureaucracy where the meetings may be big, the money may be big, the conferences may be big, the mailing list may be big, but the hearts are cold and small. In the end it’s nothing. It’s big ministries with small hearts. Big ministries with cold hearts and burned-out leaders seems to me like a great deception. The seal is upon the arm and not only upon the heart.

The Lord says, “I want to position you in ministry where you experience new discoveries of the Lord while ministering, and you impart zeal and passion for God while in the labors of ministry.”

A LOVE AS COMPREHENSIVE, AS PREVAILING AS DEATH

The comprehensive nature of the bridal seal is a divine love that’s as strong as death. In place of the word *strong*, you can write *comprehensive*. It’s as prevailing as death. How strong is death? How comprehensive is death? Death claims everything living in the natural order. God is saying that He has a love that He will impart that will prevail over everything in the natural order, just as death prevails over every living thing in the natural order. The imparted love of God can conquer every sin, every disappointment; everything that rises up against the knowledge of God, demonic or human, can be overcome. It’s a love that’s as comprehensive and as prevailing as death is in the natural realm. Nothing can escape its grasp.

IF WE OPEN OUR SPIRIT TO THIS LOVE, NOTHING CAN CONQUER IT

If our hearts are submitted to the Holy Spirit, He can free us from everything that would seek to extinguish this seal. “Many waters cannot quench love” (Song 8:7). Waters speak of obstacles and pressures of everyday life that hinder us from receiving the impartation of divine love. I’ve listed five types of water, five types of pressure, that quench love. Water by nature always puts out fire if you have enough of it. This fire isn’t a natural fire; it’s a supernatural fire. It’s not natural, it’s supernatural, and no water, no disappointment, no imprisonment, no addiction to some perversion in your life right now, can quench this love. No water is stronger than this fiery love if we yield ourselves to it over the long haul. Anger can be conquered. Lust can be conquered. Disappointment can be conquered. If we open our spirit to this love, nothing can conquer it. It conquers everything. Every water and flood will come up defeated before this raging fire.

The great reward of the bridal seal is where He says, “Set Me as a seal upon your heart. Its flames are a flame of fire. The waters cannot quench it. The floods cannot quench it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised” (Song 8:6-7, paraphrased).

THE POWER TO LOVE IS THE REWARD ITSELF

In my next three or four minutes I would like to summarize this. It’s a proverb Solomon writes that magnifies the glory and the power of love. On page 27 I have an illustration that I’ve used over the years. The young couple learns that their little girl has come down with a terminal illness. The doctor says, “You’re going to have to empty your bank account and you’re going to have to sell your house.”

They say, “Well, we have five million in the house and we have five million in the bank account.”

He says, “It is going to take everything, everything—everything that you’ve accumulated for generations, everything, but we can save the life of the little child.”

The parents agree to do it. They save the life of the little child. The neighbor comes up to them or meets them in the marketplace and says, “Wow. You’ve moved from the big, wealthy neighborhood to the little apartment. We hear you’ve become bankrupt and poor. That was courageous.”

The parents look them in the eye and say, “You don’t understand. That wasn’t noble. We gave up all the wealth of our house, all that we’ve acquired, and we despise the recognition that what we did was noble.” The power to

love is the reward itself. They say, “No, what we did wasn’t noble. We love, and that’s all we wanted. We don’t want recognition.”

THE GREAT REWARD OF THE ROMANCED HEART

Paul the apostle touched this principle, and I have it written here. He said that he counted as rubbish everything he gave up (Phil. 3:8). People think, “Well, that’s really nice.” Paul meant it. Paul had an enlightened heart. He had an overflowing heart. He had a sealed heart. When they came to Paul and said, “You gave up everything,” he said, “In the balance of what He gave me, it’s truly rubbish. I want no recognition. I want no one honoring my commitment, because in the balance of what He gave me, it’s nothing.”

They utterly despised the recognition of nobility, because the sacrifice isn’t justice in the eyes of the lover. The power to love is the only reward that they want—the great reward of the romanced heart. To feel loved and to feel love back is all they want. It makes their life transcendent. It frees them from fear. It frees them. They could be in a prison and be overflowing in the love of God.

JULY 1988: A LIFE-ALTERING ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

We’re going to look at that romanced heart in the next session. The next session is the development of the romanced heart. I’ll end with page 28. I received a prophetic word that changed my life. I believe that it will have relevance to some of you in this room—well, all of you, really. I have some of the details written out here, but I’ll give them to you briefly.

In July 1988 I was in my office after a morning prayer meeting. I opened to Song of Solomon 8:6-7 and asked Jesus to be the seal of power to love Him. I placed my cold heart before that bonfire and said, “Jesus, seal my heart.” I quoted John 17:26: “Father, the love wherewith You love Your Son, put it in me” (paraphrased). I tenderly opened my spirit before the Lord. I began gently weeping, and the presence of the Lord became discernible.

I picked up the phone, and this is the only time I’ve ever done this. It was something distinct and remarkable. I called the receptionist and said, “I know we just finished the prayer meeting, but I’m having another little prayer meeting here.” Typically I would meet with people at that time. I said, “I don’t want to meet with anyone right now, no matter who calls! The Lord is touching my heart.” It doesn’t happen that much, and hey, it was happening. I had the kite up and the wind was blowing. I wanted to stay out there in the wind. I said, “Really, give me X amount of time.”

“THE THUNDEROUS, AUDIBLE VOICE OF GOD CAME TO ME RESOUNDING WITH POWER”

Ten minutes later, the phone rang. I was a little surprised. I picked up the phone and said, “Hello?”

The receptionist said, “I know you don’t want to be interrupted, but Bob Jones is on the other end.” Most of you have heard this story: Bob Jones was one of the prophetic men in our history. He said, “He’s on the other end and he says the Lord has spoken to him, wide awake, by the thunderous, audible voice of the Lord. He just spoke to him concerning you.” The receptionist said, “I thought you would want God to get in. Is that OK?”

I said, “Yeah, always let God in. If God calls, always let the Lord in.”

I said, “Hello, Bob?” Bob said, “I’m running late and I only have, literally, one or two minutes. My alarm didn’t go off and someone is out in the car to take me to the airport for a ministry trip.” He said, “I woke up and I was sitting in my bed. I missed my alarm, and the thunderous, audible voice of God came to me resounding with power. He spoke to me a word to give to you.” He said, “I looked up at the clock and the man came in five minutes, knocking on the door. I haven’t had a chance to look it up. I don’t have a clue what it is. I got in the car and the Spirit of God nudged me and said, ‘Go tell Mike right now.’ So we backed the car up. I ran, and I literally have ninety seconds.”

I said, “Go ahead; what’s the word?”

He said, “I don’t even have a clue what it is. The Lord told me, by the audible voice of the Lord, that He’s going to release the anointing of Song of Solomon 8:6-7 upon the Church worldwide in this generation. I don’t even have a clue what Song of Solomon 8:6 says. I thought it only had four chapters. It does have eight chapters, doesn’t it?”

I said, “Yes, it does.”

He said, “It has to. Whatever Song of Solomon 8:6 is, God is going to do it across the earth in this generation. There’s an anointing that’s there. I don’t have a clue what it is. I don’t understand the Song of Solomon at all.”

I said, “Neither do I.”

He said, “Secondly, the Lord told me to tell you that this is going to be the focus of your ministry for the rest of your life. He told me audibly to tell you that. Whatever it is, that’s what the Lord is calling you to for the rest of your days.”

This was in 1988. I hung up the phone. I was reading Song of Solomon 8:6 when the call came. The Spirit of the Lord was upon me. I felt tremendously stirred by the Lord at that moment. I rose from that encounter, and I’ve had three reactions over the years. My first reaction was, I didn’t appreciate it. I went and read the Song of Solomon and I said, “Lord, this is a funny book: I mean, roses and fragrances and colors. . . Give it to the women’s ministry!” No, for real! I read it and I said, “This discourages me. I don’t like it. It doesn’t look good to me. I like verse 8:6.” I read through it and it was horrifying to me, honestly. Maybe that’s a little strong. My heart panicked and I was not happy. I’ll just say it that way.

STUDYING THE SONG OF SOLOMON WITH TEETH-GRITTING FAITH

My father in the natural was a professional boxer. He was a world champion boxer. I was raised in the gym, trained as a boxer around professional boxers. My father was involved in the Mafia, for real. It sounds like a movie, but it’s real. I hung out with men who got killed in their cars. I knew a number of men who got killed in their cars. Family friends found their bodies dead in their cars. I grew up in taverns with my dad. He took me every weekend to the taverns for years. I said, “Lord, give me the life of David or the book of Romans; give me Revelation, but not the Song of Solomon.”

By faith I began to say to the Lord, “I know it’s a good calling.” So I began to study. I began to get every commentary. I did this by teeth-gritting faith. “I see nothing here that interests me!” Every now and then, one little verse would be kind of interesting instead of confusing. I began to read it and instruct my mind. It started,

little by little, breaking up the fallow ground in my heart. Then I began to turn it into prayer—just a little phrase here and there. Then, finally, it took on a life of its own and it began to grab me. It began to pull me in.

So my first response was that I didn't appreciate it. My second response was, "I will approach it by faith with no feeling." The third response is the one I've had these last number of years: I'm absolutely ravished by this calling. The Lord has given me permission to pray over people for whom this is their life calling, and that's what we're going to do after the end of the next session. We're going to pray over people in whom this is your life calling. You may not have the audible voice of the Lord in a prophetic circumstance like this, but hearing this testimony, you're going to say, "Yes, yes, that's me." It may not be the Song of Solomon, but it's the bridal paradigm of the kingdom.

CALLING THE BODY TO LOVE THROUGH THE REVELATION OF THE BEAUTY OF GOD

Let me say this one last word and then I will pray over you. We're going to have the ministry time after the next session. Again, I said, "Lord, give this to the women's ministry." Let me tell you this. The Song of Solomon doesn't undermine your masculinity, men. It will establish and enhance your masculinity. David was the romantic of all church history. Jesus is the romantic of all the ages. Don't be afraid of this, men. Open your spirit. The Lord is about to put this as a seal of the fire of love upon the Church worldwide, and He's going to call some of the very people in this room. So men who say, "I don't know. . ." He's going to call you to this life focus as the focus of your ministry, all the days of your life. It doesn't mean you won't do anything else in ministry, but it will capture the focus of your ministry. It's calling the Body of Christ to the first commandment through the revelation of the beauty of God.

Amen. Let's stand.

MINISTRY TIME

I want to pray for men right now. I was a tough guy. I realize I'm a wimp now, but I was a tough guy in my own mind. The Lord called me to Song of Solomon and the first commandment, the romance of the gospel. I would like men, right now, who have struggled with this idea of the romance of the gospel, to come forward. In your heart you're saying, "Yes Lord, I've struggled, but this is who I am. I know this is what I'm called to." I want you to come and stand right here for just a moment. This won't in any way undermine your masculinity; it will enhance who you are as a man.