

Session 5 God’s Love Is Better Than the Wine of This World (Song 1:2)

I. REVIEW: UNDERSTANDING THE KISSES OF GOD’S WORD

²Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth [Word]—for your love is better than wine. (Song 1:2)

A. The Bride made her request to the One with authority over the King. She said, “Let Him...” She asks the One who could influence the King in personal matters. We cry “Father, let Him kiss me with the kisses of His Word.” In this, we pray the prayer of faith asking for grace to love Jesus with all our heart. The commandment to love God is God’s first priority in our lives.

³⁷Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”³⁸This is the first and great commandment.” (Mt. 22:37-38)

B. The Word of God is what proceeds from God’s mouth. For 3,000 years, rabbis have referred to the “kisses of the mouth” in this verse as the “kiss of the Torah.”

³“...that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” (Deut. 8:3)

C. The theme of the Song is the Bride’s cry for the kiss of God’s Word to touch the deepest place in her heart. This refers to encountering the Word in the deepest and most intimate way. In other words, the Word as it reveals the King’s emotions for His Bride and awakens our heart in the threefold love of God (love from God then for God which overflows to others).

II. THE SUPERIOR PLEASURES IN THE GRACE OF GOD

A. After asking the Father for the kisses of God’s Word, she gives her reason for wanting the kisses of the Word. She speaks directly to Jesus in the second person, “For Your love (affection) is better than wine.” We can use the word *because* in place of the word *for*. She is saying that experiencing Jesus’ affection is better than the wine of this fallen world.

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B. She uses the wine metaphor because wine exhilarates the heart. Wine, in the context of this marriage metaphor, is the drink of earthly celebration. It is the drink of gladness that makes people happy. It speaks of the intoxicating things of this world, both good and bad.

1. There is the “good wine” of God’s blessing and also the “bad wine” of our sin. She is saying more than, “Your love is better than sin.” That is obvious. She is saying, “Experiencing Your love is better than all the other privileges in this life.

2. The good blessings of God in our circumstances include financial increase, favor in relationships, physical health, new spheres of influence in ministry, etc. The wine speaks of the best experiences that we can have in the natural realm (in this age).

- C. As wonderful as God's blessings are, they are not to be the primary focus of our heart. Many experience God's blessing in the increase of finances or prominence, etc., without their hearts being enlarged in the love of God. Many who increase in God's blessing in their circumstances often gradually decrease in their love for Jesus (Rev. 2:4-5).
- ³***"You have persevered...and have labored for my name's sake...⁴Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will...remove your lampstand." (Rev. 2:3-5)***
- D. The Bride introduces the priority that the "superior pleasures" of the gospel have in her life. This reveals her theology of her life and her pursuit of holiness.
- ²***Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is better than wine (Song 1:2).***
- ²***...with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine. (Song 1:2, NIV)***
- E. "Is better than," "is superior to," or "is more delightful than," point to the superior pleasures that come from growing in revelation of God's heart (affection). These superior pleasures are in contrast to the inferior pleasures of sin. God frees us from the dominion of the inferior pleasures of sin by allowing us to experience superior pleasures that are more powerful.
- F. There are many different categories of pleasures that we are to celebrate under the leadership of Jesus. There are physical, emotional, and mental pleasures. God is the author of these. God made us spiritually, physically, and emotionally hungry/needy. We long for happiness; we yearn deeply for pleasure, because we are designed by God to be pleasure seekers. This, in itself, is not sinful; finding our pleasure in unrighteousness is what is sinful.
- G. God created the human spirit with seven longings that draw us to Him and reflect His glory in us. These longings are common in all of us. They give insight into the way God designed our spirit. Each longing is a reflection of God's personality. We are made in His image, thus we have these longings. We feel delight because He is filled with delight; we have happiness because He has happiness (See the book: ***Seven Longings of the Human Heart*** by M. Bickle and D. Hiebert).
- H. These seven longings are: the longing for the assurance that we are enjoyed by God, the longing to be fascinated, the longing to be beautiful, the longing to be great, the longing for intimacy without shame, the longing to be wholehearted and passionate, and the longing to make a deep and lasting impact.
- I. They are cravings put into us strategically by God. They will never, ever go away. The reason food is so good is because we were created to be hungry. The reason God satisfies us with pleasure is because He created a hunger for pleasure in us. They each have an element of delight, pain, and ache as they woo us into God's presence. The enemy uses these cravings to woo us into darkness as well. When these longings are not touched in the grace of God they leave us empty; they leave us with pain, mourning, and dissatisfaction. God created us with a "God-shaped vacuum" (gnawing emptiness) in our heart that can only be filled by Him.

- J. Satan counterfeits the pleasures that God created so that he might draw us away from God. Sin produces immediate pleasure. No one sins out of obligation. We sin because we believe that it will provide a pleasure that is superior to obeying God. The power of temptation rests on a deceptive promise that sin will bring more satisfaction than living for God, thus, it is referred to as the deceitfulness of sin (deceitful lusts).
- ²² *...put off...the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts... (Eph. 4:22)*
- ¹³ *...lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb. 3:13)*
- K. The greatest pleasures that we can experience are spiritual ones. These are best experienced by encountering Jesus as the Bridegroom God. This intoxicates our heart and makes us lovesick. God does not call us to holiness so that He can test us by keeping us from a life of pleasure. Holiness is not drudgery; it is a call to pleasure that is perfect and eternal.
- ¹¹ *In Your presence is fullness of joy...at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Ps. 16:11)*
- L. The Bride develops the theme of the superior pleasure in God throughout the Song.
- ³ *I sat down in his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. (Song 2:3)*
- M. Sin is pleasurable and appears to be the most pleasurable thing the human spirit can experience until we experience the full truth of the gospel. The superior pleasures of the Spirit are far more powerful than the inferior pleasure of sin. God's main strategy in producing a holy people and restoring the first commandment to first place in the generation in which the Lord returns is to introduce the superior pleasures of the gospel into our experience.
- N. The end-time saints will come up victorious over the Antichrist, singing about Jesus as they marvel at His greatness. The martyrs are victorious in love because their love never diminished in the midst of temptation and persecution.
- ² *I saw...those who have the victory over the beast [Antichrist]...standing on the sea of glass...*
- ³ *They sing...saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works..." (Rev. 15:2-3)*
- O. This truth is seen later in the song when Jesus says that the waters of temptation and persecution cannot quench or drown God's love in us as we truly experience it. Our experience of God's love is not to be quenched or drowned by the flood of condemnation or compromise. Many have a quenched heart in which their ability to experience God's love has been drowned.
- ⁷ *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 8:7)*
- P. Paul spoke of experiencing Jesus as surpassing any privilege in this age.
- ⁸ *I...count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus...for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ... (Phil. 3:8)*

- Q. The reward of a lover is the power to love. A lover does twice as much as the worker and does not care for any reward except the power to love. Do you know what happens when the worker becomes a lover? They throw away the checklist! The lover does not need a checklist, and every now and then, a worker becomes a lover. It is a glorious thing to watch.
- R. We are wise to exert our strength for the rest of our life to answer the question, “How much better is the affection of God than the wine of other blessings?”

III. AFFECTION-BASED OBEDIENCE: MOTIVATED BY SATISFACTION IN JESUS

- A. “Affection-based obedience” is obedience that flows from experiencing Jesus’ love (affection). We understand He has affection for us and we experience an impartation of it back to Him. It is the strongest kind of obedience because it results in the deepest and most consistent obedience. A lovesick person will embrace and endure anything for the sake of love.
- B. “Obedience by faith,” or obedience without feeling God’s presence, is still required in God’s Word. In other words, we must continue to obey God when we do not feel like it.
- C. “Fear-based obedience” or “shame-based obedience” is obedience that flows from fear of being put to shame or the fear of suffering negative consequences. This is biblical. However, it is not enough to motivate us to consistently resist the pleasures of sin for many years. It is not the most effective approach to obedience.
- D. Experiencing God is more effective in motivating us to resist sin than the fear of consequences. Why? Because the temptation to experience the immediate pleasure of sin is usually more powerful than the fear of punishment. This fear of sin’s consequences does not overpower the tendency in our hearts to sin. Instead, it will cause us to sin in secret, in more creative ways. We sin because we enjoy the pleasure it brings. We sin when our heart is hungry and unsatisfied with God. Our struggle for holiness must be set in context to our pursuit to live satisfied in God.
- E. Picture giving a homeless boy a ticket for a vacation by the sea in which he would stay at a resort hotel, eat excellent food and sleep on a clean bed. Imagine the hungry little boy placing the ticket in his cardboard box hidden under the shelter that he sleeps in to keep out of the rain and cold. Instead of enjoying the hotel, he continues to eat rotten meat that he gathered from the trash.
- F. C. S. Lewis said: “We are half-hearted creatures fooling about with alcohol and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us. We are like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because we cannot imagine what is meant by an offer of a holiday at the sea.”
- G. That’s the choice we make when we are tempted with sin. It looks as if it will satisfy us, when in fact it is spoiled meat. The pleasures of God are a banquet set before us, a table of spiritual delights that can deliver us from the emptiness of seeking pleasure in sin. The way to free the heart from the domination of sin is by delighting in God. Encountering Jesus is a superior pleasure that transcends anything that sin can offer us.

- H. Holiness has often been presented in a negative way with endless lists of threats and warnings of the consequences of sin. The Word of God teaches about the consequences of deliberate, sinful rebellion. The Bible is full of don'ts and prohibitions, but these laws and rules were never designed by God to supernaturally transform the human heart.
- I. The approach of many is to only use shame and fear to motivate people into keeping a list of dos and don'ts. But in the end, the allure of the immediate pleasure of sin is often more powerful than the fear of long-term consequences. Yes, we must continue to present the consequences of sin, but we must do so realizing that this alone is not sufficient. Something more is needed. Warning people about the social and spiritual consequences of sin does not often cause them to reject pornography, greed, lying, or cheating.
- J. Moses had experienced the pleasures of the flesh that accompanied the riches and power of his position in Egypt, but he chose greater riches. He experienced something more pleasurable and beautiful than Egypt, something supernaturally attractive and altogether satisfying. As you press into the pleasures of holiness, like Moses, you will discover that none can fill the soul like Jesus.
- ²⁴By faith Moses...²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. (Heb. 11:24-26)*

¹⁸I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8:18)

¹⁷Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory... (2 Cor. 4:17)

IV. GOD LOVES US IN THE SAME WAY THAT GOD LOVES GOD

- A. At the Last Supper, Jesus emphasized that the measure of the Father's love (affection) for Jesus is the same measure of His love for His people. Jesus emphasized this three times (John 14-17). This single truth gives every believer the right to view themselves as "God's favorite."
- ⁹"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide [live] in My love." (Jn. 15:9)*
- ²³"...that the world may know that You...have loved them as You have loved Me." (Jn. 17:23)*
- ²⁶"I declared...Your name...that the love with which You loved Me may be in them..." (Jn. 17:26)*
- B. The ultimate statement about our worth and value is that Jesus has the same measure of love (affection) towards us that His Father has towards Him.
- C. The way that the Father loves Jesus is the only accurate measure in which we can understand how Jesus feels about us. God's love is a powerful reality that includes deep desire, enjoyment, pleasure and longing. It is not a sterile, religious idea devoid of passion. Ponder the vast implications of how much the Father loves Jesus. Such a truth had never been spoke before.

- D. Oh! the mystery of the vastness of the ocean of God's love for us. The gospel is a call to live in the vast ocean of divine love. We will know the pleasure of loving God in the way that God loves God as we are loved in the way God loves God.
- ¹⁷...you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may be able to comprehend...the width and length and depth and height—¹⁹to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge... (Eph. 3:17-19)*
- E. The disciples were sincere, yet still spiritually immature. Jesus' affirmations of love were spoken to weak believers that He knew would betray Him that very night (Mt. 26:31). They would feel great condemnation and shame. God felt great passion even for these ambitious, immature, young apostles who would betray Jesus that very night. Jesus knew that the only thing that would stabilize them was knowing how God felt about them. This is the strongest revelation that can touch the human heart.
- F. Jesus gave them the revelation of His love to prepare them to love God under the pressures of condemnation, disappointment, temptation, disillusionment, persecution, and their future service.
- G. Jesus knew they would be devastated with disappointment when the Pharisees and Romans seemed to win by killing John the Baptist and Jesus. Their movement seemed to be over. In the days to come, they would be beaten and thrown in prison. How could God still be with them?
- H. We best win the battle against temptation by enjoying God. The best way to overcome sin is in experiencing that His love is better than wine (being satisfied in God). Turning the Song of Solomon into devotional prayer is how we experience this
- I. We must make it a priority to meditate on the truths about God's emotions for us. This is important to our emotional health. We are transformed the most when we understand how God feels about us, especially in our weakness. ***This revelation causes us to run to Him instead of from Him.*** It causes us to have confidence in His love and to open our spirit to Him in our weakness. Many sincere believers seek God with a condemned heart or a closed, guarded spirit.
- J. I wrote a book called Passion For Jesus, thus, I am often asked, "How can we have more passion for Jesus?" It takes God to love God, or it takes the power of God on our heart to love God back. When God wants to empower us to love Him, He reveals Himself as One who loves us. We love (enjoy or pursue) Him because we understand that He first loved (enjoyed or pursued) us.
- ¹⁹We love Him because [we understand that] He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)*