

Session 10 Her Journey Begins with Spiritual Crisis (Song 1:5-11)

I. THE BRIDE’S JOURNEY BEGINS: THE PARADOX OF GRACE - “DARK, BUT LOVELY”

⁵I am dark [in my heart], but lovely [to God], O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not look upon me, because I am dark... (Song 1:5-6).

- A. The Bride’s spiritual journey begins with a spiritual crisis common to every sincere believer, as seen in her twofold confession of faith (Song 1:5). I refer to this as the “paradox of grace” because as she discovers her sin, she also knows that she is lovely to God. The Holy Spirit allows her to see her sinfulness as well as her loveliness to God. This describes a sincere yet weak believer.
- B. We are beautiful to God, even in our weakness, for four reasons. First, our loveliness comes by receiving the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17-21). Second, at the new birth, the Holy Spirit put a yes, in our spirit, to God. Each movement of our heart to God is His work in us called a willing spirit (Ps. 51:12 NASB; Mt. 26:41). Third, our beauty is related to God’s emotional makeup. The very affections and passions in God’s heart determine how He feels towards us. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. God views things very differently than man does (1 Sam. 16:7; Isa. 55:7-9). Fourth, God sees us through the lens of our eternal destiny as the Bride of Christ.
- C. We must understand the three stages of our victory in Christ. First, our sincere intention to obey God is where our victory begins. Second, we have a partial breakthrough yet with a continued struggle. We are victorious on a regular basis yet still war with our flesh in particular areas (Gal. 5:16-17). Third, is a substantial breakthrough with transformed desires (Rom. 6:14-23).

II. HER SPIRITUAL CRISIS: REJECTION AND SHAME

⁶Do not look [stare; NASB] upon me, because I am dark...My mother’s sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard [heart] I have not kept.⁷Tell me, O You [Jesus] whom I love, where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions? (Song 1:6-7)

- A. She describes five different pressures related to her spiritual crisis in Song 1:6-7. She feels ashamed by those staring at her because of her failure; being rejected by her angry brothers; being overworked by being made to keep other vineyards; allowing her own vineyard (heart) to not be kept with fresh love for Jesus; and for serving Jesus at a distance.
- B. She describes her brothers as her “mother’s sons.” Throughout the Song (1; 6; 3:4, 11; 8:2, 5) the mother speaks of the Church since we are born of God through the agency of the Church by the Spirit. Paul and others wrote of the Church and its leaders and the New Jerusalem as a “mother” (Gal. 4:19, 26; 1 Thes. 2:6-7). Those who do God’s will are His mother and brothers (Mt. 12:46-50). God is our father and the Church is spoken of as our mother. Jesus, the foundation of the Church, was born from the seed of a woman (Gen. 3:15). Redeemed Israel was represented as a “mother” that gave birth to Jesus the man-child (Rev. 12:5).

- C. The sons were angry at her youthful zeal. They speak of older, spiritually dull leaders who do not appreciate fervent young believers. Why? First, zealous believers bring conviction to spiritually dull believers (who often simply dismiss true spiritual zeal as legalism). Second, the untempered zeal and pride of zealous believers often make spiritually dull leaders angry. Our zeal must be seasoned with wisdom and humility. It is common for those with new fervency for Jesus to be self-absorbed and prideful in the way they call others to be wholehearted. Some exalt themselves and condemn others who do not express devotion to God in the same way they do.
- D. She was mistreated by the angry sons who overworked her by taking advantage of her fervency, giving her many responsibilities in different vineyards (plural). She burns out spiritually. Burn-out doesn't come from hard work as much as from a religious yoke, which speaks of working without connecting with the Holy Spirit in the work. Embracing too many responsibilities out of the fear of man and the desire to be noticed by others leads to burn out.
- E. She kept other vineyards, but did not keep her own vineyard (or heart). Our first responsibility before God is our own personal walk with Jesus. Originally, what she wanted most were the kisses of His Word. However, as time goes by, her vineyard (the garden of her heart) was choked by the weeds of spiritual coldness, sin, and shame. Taking care of her own vineyard means nurturing her personal communion with God and doing His will.

⁶They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept. (Song 1:6)

- F. She feels the pain of serving Jesus at a distance. This happens when we serve without connecting with the Holy Spirit. She feels like the veiled woman who served the Shepherd at a distance.

⁷Tell me, O You [Jesus] whom I love, where you feed your flock...for why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of Your companions? (Song 1:7)

1. In the ancient world, women veiled themselves when working with strangers who they were unfamiliar with. Why should I serve down the road and not near You like I used to? These two issues speak of living at a distance from the Shepherd that she so loves.
2. She wants to be with Him wherever He is. She lost the sweetness in her communion with God. She longs for the kisses of His Word and the chamber experiences with the Lord.

III. HER DESPERATE CRY TO HAVE MORE OF JESUS

⁷Tell me, O You [Jesus] whom I love, where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions? (Song 1:7)

- A. In the midst of this crisis, she cries out with a desperate prayer. She remembers the kisses of His Word and her chamber experiences. She asks the great Shepherd for counsel, "Tell me, where do you feed Your flock?" We can only offer this desperate cry if we have confidence that we are lovely to God, even in our weakness.

1. She still loves Him and cries out, ***“Tell me, O You whom I love.”*** She knows that she failed in her weak love. Weak love is not false love. She is still a genuine lover of God. She is not a hopeless hypocrite as the enemy wants her to believe. She has confidence that her love is real even in her crisis and spiritual dullness.
 2. She did not say, “Tell me, since I am a helpless hypocrite.” She cries out, “I know I am a lover of God.” This is similar to when Peter cried out, “Lord, You know that I love You though I have just betrayed You.”
- B. She is desperate to encounter Jesus. Ministry activity and even promotion is not enough. She wants to know where He feeds His flock. This is an expression of her prayer, “Draw me away.”
- C. At noon, or in the heat of the day, a sheep will lie down if its stomach is full. God wants us to rest in the midst of the heat of the day (the pressure of this life) by connecting with Him, not just working for Him. Sheep will only lie down at noon when they are full.
- ²He makes me to lie down in green pastures... (Ps. 23:2)***
- D. She offers her prayer in the language of the shepherd. “Where will You satisfy me under the heat of the pressures of the day?” She longs to be satisfied again with Jesus, or to rest at noon. She is saying: “I have been fed by others, but now I want You to feed me. Where will You satisfy the cry of my spirit?”
- E. Jesus longs for us to pray this prayer. He does not want us to give up and give in to a spiritually dull life in God. He does not want us to write ourselves off as a hopeless hypocrite. It pleases Him when we cry out, “Feed my heart like You used to. I am a veiled woman. I am serving at a distance. My own vineyard has weeds in it. Many things are going wrong. I am failing and the people are angry. I need to touch You whom I love.” Regardless what it costs her, she wants the fire of intimacy with God to consume her again. She wants Him to feed her again. She cries out to recover her “first love” (see Rev. 2:4)

IV. JESUS’ GLORIOUS ANSWER: SEVEN ESSENTIAL STATEMENTS

⁸If you do not know, O fairest [most beautiful] among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds’ tents. (Song 1:8)

- A. Jesus hears her desperate prayer (Song 1:7) and personally answers her (Song 1:8-11). He gives her seven statements that answer where she can find Him. First, He affirms her as beautiful in His eyes, then gives a threefold answer (1:8b,c,d) and then a threefold affirmation (1:9-11). She responds with great gratitude (Song 1:12). A vital part of the theology of holy passion is found in Jesus’ answer. This is the first revelation of Jesus to the Bride on her journey. He shows Himself as the “Wonderful Counselor,” or the Shepherd who gives her practical counsel in how to go forward in her weakness.

- B. He addresses the Bride as “O fairest of women.” The word “fair” is translated in most versions of the Bible as “beautiful” (NASB/NIV). Jesus is saying, “O most beautiful of women.” He is saying, “I know there are weeds in your garden and that you serve Me at a distance, but I see the cry in your heart to love Me.” He woos her heart with the beauty she possesses in Him.
- C. Jesus starts by saying, “If you do not know.” His answer shocks many people. We would expect a rebuke. He knows our garden isn’t being kept and that we serve Him at a distance, however, we are most beautiful to Him. He calls us beautiful even in the midst of our disorientation and failure. We might be unlovely to the angry sons, but we are most beautiful to Him. We may despise ourselves, but we are most beautiful to Him. He speaks to her shame and rejection.
- D. Jesus calls her the most beautiful woman. This is in light of the different women of the earth (the false religions) who despise Jesus. He is not comparing her to a mature apostle. He looks at us in light of the 5-6 billion people on earth who have no interest in Jesus. We care intensely about Jesus and have the gift of righteousness. This is beautiful in God’s eyes.
- E. In Song 1:4e, the Bride taught the virgins, “We will remember His love.” Jesus is causing her to remember His love in answering her by telling her how He views her in her weakness. Jesus first speaks to our heart in our crisis by calling us, “most beautiful.” Then He gives us instructions.
- F. Jesus’ threefold answer for where He feeds His flock and establishes us in intimacy with God emphasizes the importance of Body life. All three answers relate to life in the Body and answer the three most powerful temptations that are common to all.

⁸If you do not know, O fairest [most beautiful] among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds’ tents. (Song 1:8)

1. Commitment to Body life (v. 8c): Refuse unsanctified isolation
 2. Commitment to servant ministry (v. 8d): Refuse unsanctified idleness
 3. Commitment to spiritual authority (v. 8e): Refuse unsanctified independence
- G. Drawing is singular, because it is intimacy. Running is plural because it is ministry. God does not want us running in ministry in isolation, idleness, or with an independent spirit.
- H. First, is commitment to Body life as we refuse unsanctified isolation (Song 1:8c). He tells her to follow in the footsteps of the flock, or get involved in the fellowship of the Body. The “footsteps of the flock” is the place where all the sheep walk with God. The Lord says, “follow in the place where the Body walks.” He is saying, “Get back into fellowship, do not overreact to the angry brothers who judge and mistreat you.” Much isolation from the Body is not motivated by a desire to seek God but by rejection, bitterness, and shame. The devil wants us in isolation to destroy us.
- ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some... (Heb. 10:25)***
- I. Second, take care of our God-given responsibilities as we refuse unsanctified idleness (Song 1:8d). We are to feed the little flock that God sets before us. Jesus will give us more of Himself as we take on the responsibility to feed the young ones, or the little flock that God sends to us.

- J. Third, submit to spiritual authority by refusing unsanctified independence (Song 1:8e). She serves the Body beside the tents of the true shepherds. Jesus wants us to have an open spirit to the shepherds (leaders) that He places us under. The spirit of lawlessness is abounding (Mt. 24:12). God knows that every leader that He has ever placed over you, or ever will, is an imperfect leader. We find Jesus in deep ways as we relate to imperfect leaders. God uses imperfect shepherds to temper us and to reveal the unsettled things in our heart. When we see the faults of the imperfect leaders that God has put over us, we are tempted to resist dwelling by their tents with a teachable spirit. Submission is about humility and having an open spirit to authority.
- K. **Summary:** Jesus' threefold answer touches three main temptations in the Body. First, is the temptation of isolation and bitterness when we feel rejected or mistreated by the angry sons and when we feel shame related to our sin. We are to stay in fellowship as God's way to heal us. Second, is the temptation to selfishness and fear. Jesus wants us to take care of the little ones. We find Jesus best in the context of serving others. Third, is the temptation to resist spiritual authority.

V. HER SINCERITY IS REAFFIRMED BY THE LORD

⁹I have compared you, my love, to my filly among Pharaoh's chariots. ¹⁰Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold. ¹¹We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver. (Song 1:9-11)

- A. In Song 1:9-10, He compares her to three things that reaffirm the loveliness of her sincerity and willing spirit before God. Then, He gives her a promise in Song 1:11. The first thing He does is to speak to her heart to affirm her by calling her "My love." He speaks with love to her heart again.
- B. God sees her sincere and strong desire to follow Jesus in righteousness. She is as a filly among Pharaoh's chariots.

⁹I have compared you, my love, to my filly among Pharaoh's chariots. (Song 1:9)

1. A filly is a horse. The horse is a symbol of strength and power. The context speaks of her strength in righteousness. Pharaoh's chariots had the greatest and most trained, skilled horses in the earth. He likens her strength to them.
 2. "Among Pharaoh's chariots" speaks of the finest and strongest war horses in the world. The horses of Egypt were well known throughout the world in those days. Pharaoh had the most highly skilled and trained horses in the earth. Pharaoh chose the very best horses of all the horses of Egypt to pull his own chariot. Pharaoh's own chariot had the best of the best horses. Pharaoh had thousands of horses in his great stables and the one that pulls his personal chariot is the best one. Solomon, the wealthiest man in the world, bought many of Pharaoh's horses. He was one of the few that could afford them.
- C. Our emotions are attractive to Him. He has touched our emotions with His Spirit. The emotional dimension of her life has been touched by God with her sincere devotion for Jesus.

¹⁰Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold. ¹¹We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver. (Song 1:10)

1. The cheeks speak of emotion throughout the Song. They reveal anger, joy, etc. When we look at somebody's cheeks, we can tell if there is joy in their heart or if there is anger or sadness. The emotions of a person are expressed through the cheeks.
 2. The ornaments are created by the skillful work of an artist to beautify its object. Jesus is the artist that has worked to beautify us (Isa. 61:3). Though God sees lust and anger in us, He also sees passion growing in us for Him. God is saying, "Your emotions are lovely. I have skillfully worked in you a 'yes!' for My Son." That moves the very heart of God.
- D. God sees her submission to divine authority and her resolute will to obey Jesus.

¹⁰Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold. We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver. (Song 1:10-11)

1. The neck speaks symbolically of the will. The Bible speaks of people that are stiff-necked, which means a stubborn or rebellious person. The neck also speaks of godly submission. The neck is what turns the head as it chooses which way to go, right or left. When a King triumphed over another nation, the conquering general put his foot over that defeated king's neck which spoke of submission.
2. The chains of gold speak of royal authority. Only a king had chains of gold. In those days, few people could afford a chain of gold besides a King. A chain of gold was rare and expensive because it was only worn by royalty. A chain of gold with the king's emblem on it was worn by the prince as he walked through the town.

VI. THE LORD'S PROMISE TO FINISH THAT WHICH HE BEGAN IN US

¹¹We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver. (Song 1:11)

- A. Ornaments of gold speak of divine character. She will be Christ-like in her golden character. This speaks of believers purified with fire (Mal. 3:1-4). Studs of silver speak of redemption. She will be used to bring redemption to other people. She will be equipped to deliver others.
- B. "We will make you" is a divine promise to complete His work in her. He is still answering her question from verse 7, "Where will You feed me?" God promises to work something special in her. He will make us into a person who fully chooses divine character (gold) and is equipped with silver to deliver others (silver). He promises us victory in the areas we have stumbled and we will be an agent of redemption to others.