

Session 13 Challenging the Comfort Zone (Song 2:8-17)

I. THE BRIDE'S IDENTITY AND LIFE PURPOSE: BEING JESUS' INHERITANCE

- A. The Bride now understands her spiritual identity and life purpose as being Jesus' inheritance that the Father promised Him. Jesus wants more than mandatory obedience. He longs for an eternal companion (Bride) who voluntarily chooses to love Him with adoring obedience.
- B. The affections of the human heart are the most precious possession to God. There is nothing that He wants more. Jesus died to redeem, and thus possess, human affections.
- C. Jesus has a specific plan and purpose for each believer—to bring each of us to the place of feasting at God's banqueting table. In other words, to celebrate His love for us and ours for Him. Jesus' primary goal in His leadership over our lives (His banner over us) is to lead us in a way that reveals and imparts His love to us. We are first called to remember His love (Song 1:2, 4).
⁴He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. (Song 2:4)
- D. She is lovesick; thus, Jesus' leadership in her life was effective. She cries out for more of Jesus.
⁵Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick. (Song 2:5)
- E. The Spirit solemnly charged others to not disturb her as she sat at the wedding table under the apple tree. However, the Lord is now disturbing her as the season in her life suddenly changes.
⁷I charge you...do not stir up [disturb] nor awaken love until it pleases. (Song 2:7)

II. OVERVIEW OF SONG 2:8-17

- A. This passage marks the beginning of a significant turning in the maiden's life. The depth of her commitment, as seen throughout Song 4-8, flows out of this new revelation of Jesus. He reveals Himself to her as the sovereign King over the nations (the third revelation of Jesus in the Song). She only knew Jesus as the counseling shepherd (Song 1:7-11) and the affectionate Father (Song 1:12) sitting at the table feeding her grapes and apples with love. Now she sees a different aspect of His personality; she sees Him as one who can easily leap over all mountains (obstacles).
- B. In Song 1:4 the maiden prayed, "Draw me and we will run after you." A spiritual crisis in her life begins as Jesus now introduces the "Let us run" phase of her life. This is her second crisis as she discovers her fear. In Song 1:5-7, she faced her first spiritual crisis as she discovered her sin.
- C. Jesus called her out of the comfort zone so that she might experience deep partnership with Him. She refuses to obey because of fear. She tells Him to turn and go without her (Song 2:17).
- D. The Lord is testing her confession that the Lord's banner (purpose) over her life is to reveal love to her then to impart it in her. The issue before her is whether she believes that Jesus' leadership is good. In other words, is it safe to obey Jesus 100 percent, even when it is costly and painful?

III. JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF TO HER AS THE SOVEREIGN KING

⁸*The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*

⁹*My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag [adult male deer]. (Song 2:8-9a)*

- A. The maiden receives a new revelation of Jesus as the sovereign King. She sees Him as the “Lord of all the nations” who effortlessly conquers all the difficult mountains or high places. She sees Jesus as a gazelle or a young stag who may easily leap in victory on the mountains. A gazelle or young stag (deer) has the ability to easily and quickly ascend a mountain with boundless energy.
- B. King Jesus triumphed over all demonic powers and principalities (Eph. 1:22). He has overcome all obstacles (human and demonic). We command the “mountains of adversity” to move. The hills being smaller than mountains speak of the smaller difficulties we face.
²³*“For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart...those things he says will be done...” (Mk. 11:23)*
- C. Zerubbabel was to speak grace to the mountains of adversity that stood before him.
⁷*“Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’” (Zech. 4:7)*
- D. She recognizes the voice of her Beloved, the One who she loves. Jesus speaks tenderly to us in love when He calls us out of the comfort zone to join Him on the dangerous mountains of risk. Each time the Bride speaks to Jesus she calls Him “my Beloved.” When she speaks about Jesus to others, she refers to Him as the One she loves. Each time Jesus speaks to the Bride in the Song, He calls her, “My love,” referencing His affection or “fair one,” referencing her beauty. The name “My love” is used 22 times in the Song. The name “Beloved” is used 22 times in the Song.

IV. THE WALL OF SECURITY AND PROTECTION

⁹*Behold, he stands behind our wall; he is looking through the windows, gazing through the lattice. (Song 2:9b)*

- A. Jesus is pictured as standing or as ready for action. He is usually pictured in Scripture as sitting in rest and victory with His feet upon His enemies (Ps. 110:1). When Stephen died, the Lord stood up to receive him (Acts 7:55). When He stands, powerful things are about to happen.
- B. Jesus stands behind a wall looking into the house in which the maiden sits undisturbed. Jesus is described as standing outside the door of the Laodicean church as He knocked (Rev. 3:20).
- C. She rightly describes it as “our” wall. It is not her wall but their wall because she had been led by the Spirit’s commission to remain undisturbed at the table until He awakened her (Song 2:7).
- D. Jesus looks at her through the windows with the intention of wooing her with His gaze to draw her forth into a deeper relationship with Himself.

V. CALLED OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE TO DEEP PARTNERSHIP WITH JESUS

¹⁰*My beloved spoke, and said to me: “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.” (Song 2:10)*

A. Jesus is ready for action and deep partnership with the maiden. Therefore, He calls her to arise from her comfort and security to come away with Him to conquer the mountains of this fallen world. Jesus commissioned His Bride to work with Him as He brings the nations to obedience.

¹⁹*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” (Mt. 28:19)*

B. Jesus challenges us to the mountains of total faith and obedience. These high places involve embracing difficult assignments and relationships that challenge our sense of security and comfort. She does not like the risk and heights of the mountains, but only wants to sit under the shade tree eating apples with Jesus (Song 2:3).

C. She doesn't like the risks of walking by faith and the struggles of spiritual warfare. John Wimber said that faith is spelled R-I-S-K.” Faith (confidence in God) is the way of the kingdom.

D. The question is, is it safe to go with Jesus out of the comfort zone? Will we miss out if we obey Him 100 percent? In the flesh, it seems safer to be in the boat without Jesus instead of being on the water with Him. This is one of the most practical foundational truths that all of us must live in.

E. She must rise if she is to experience mature partnership with Jesus. We can still go to heaven with “comfort-zone Christianity,” but we will not go deep in partnership with Him. There are seven verbs used in Song 2:8-10 to describe the process Jesus uses to awaken us to mature partnership. They include Jesus coming, leaping, skipping, standing, looking, gazing, and speaking.

VI. THE PROPHETIC SIGNS OF FRUITFULNESS

A. Jesus encouraged the maiden by revealing that it was the time for the harvest (fruitfulness).

¹¹*For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. ¹²The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. ¹³The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away! (Song 2:11-13)*

B. He appeals to the signs of the times revealing that the season of harvest is not far away. Therefore, she must quickly learn to fully trust and obey Him now.

C. The Lord reminds us of His faithfulness to us in the past in the winter season. The winter season is dark with cold rains. It is a difficult time when few things grow outwardly. When we are not sure if we are going to make it, the Lord proves that His banner over us is love. Jesus reminds us of His past interventions and past faithfulness in previous days in our journey. Jesus could say, “The winter is past and the cold rains are over and gone and your heart is still alive in Me.” Jesus helps her to remember His love (Song 1:4). This is one of the main themes in the Song.

- D. If Jesus was faithfully with us in past difficulties, He will also be with us in future ones. There is no reason to believe that Jesus will forget us as we go up the mountain with Him. We have no need to hide behind the wall.
- E. Jesus also points to the future as He highlights the prophetic signs of a soon coming harvest. We are encouraged by seeing the early stages of the harvest. They guarantee that the full harvest is coming soon. Seeing this gives us urgency to be prepared. We don't have years to waste.
- F. Jesus encouraged the apostles by pointing out that the harvest was ready. Peter had recently given up his fishing business. Within three years, the Jerusalem revival was to begin, followed by the revivals in the book of Acts. It was essential that they learn to fully trust and obey Jesus.
³⁵*“Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” (Jn. 4:35)*
- G. Jesus points to the signs of the harvest. Flowers appear on the vine to signify that the harvest of grapes will soon follow. It is clear that the “flowers of revival” are budding across the nations.
- H. The voice of the turtledove is heard in Israel at the harvest time. The fig tree puts forth the green figs just before the mature figs. The fragrance of the young tender grapes indicates the harvest.
- I. The time of singing associated with the harvest has begun. The greatest revival in history is around the corner. The singing has begun, as houses of prayer are springing up worldwide, and as days of worship (Global Day of Prayer, The Call, etc.) gather multitudes to stadiums to sing.
- J. Jesus speaks tenderly to the maiden by calling her “My love and My fair (beautiful) one.” Jesus knows that she will refuse Him, but she is still as beautiful to Him as when her vineyard was not kept (Song 1:7-8). We are much more motivated to obey Him when we feel loved and beautiful in His eyes. He is not speaking in a harsh judgmental tone.

¹³*Rise up, my love, my fair one [beautiful], and come away! (Song 2:13)*

VII. WE ARE SECURE BEFORE A TENDER GOD THROUGH THE CROSS OF JESUS

¹⁴*“O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.” (Song 2:14)*

- A. The Lord reveals His tender affection for us, even as we struggle through our fears. Jesus affirms her sincerity by calling her “My dove.” A dove speaks of purity and loyalty. The Holy Spirit is pictured as a pure dove. Jesus knew that it was in her heart to obey Him. Jesus knows that she will compromise in Song 2:17, yet He calls her, “My dove.” He didn't call her a deceitful snake.
- B. We find our safety in God's grace in two places, the cleft and the cliff. The cleft of the rock speaks of the finished work of the cross. We are to stand with confidence before God in our weakness as we present ourselves to God, trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection.

- C. Jesus was the spiritual Rock in Moses' day and is the rock on which the Church is built.
⁴They drank of that spiritual Rock...and that Rock was Christ... (1 Cor. 10:4)
¹⁸“On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail...” (Mt. 16:18)
- D. God hid Moses in the cleft of the rock (open space in the mountain) to protect him from seeing God's face and being struck dead by the glory of God.
²⁰“You [Moses] cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live...²¹...Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock.²²So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.” (Ex. 33:20-22)
- E. This hiding in the cleft of the rock was a type of salvation through the cross. The cleft of the rock speaks of the “wounds” in Jesus' side that He received on the cross. We hide from the judgment of God in the cleft of the rock or in the atoning death of Jesus.
- F. The “secret places of the cliff” speak of the mystery of Jesus' resurrection. It is the ultimate secret place in which a Man ascended to God. The cliff ascends upward as the stairway up to heaven as Jacob's ladder (Gen. 28:12-17). “The secret place of the cliff” is translated as “the secret place of the stairs” (KJV) or “the secret place of the steep pathway” (NASB).
- G. Jesus wants us to worship Him and not draw back from Him in times of weakness as we stand in the cleft of the rock and in the secret place of the cliff, or in the mysterious place of the resurrection. We are to stand confidently in the grace of God as we ask Him for help.
- H. Jesus wants to see our face and hear our voice in worship and prayer as we cry for help in our weakness. We tell Jesus that we love Him without fearing that we are hypocrites in the process. Some think that when they struggle with sin that their voice is repulsive to God and their face is ugly to Him. God wants us to run to Him in confidence, instead of from Him in condemnation.
¹⁴“Let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.” (Song 2:14)
- I. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told Peter to pray in the time of temptation. Jesus prophesied that Peter would deny Jesus three times. This was due to Peter's fear and weak flesh.
³⁴“Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times...⁴¹Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mt. 26:34, 41)
- J. Jesus saw Peter's willing spirit, even knowing that Peter would stumble that night. Jesus in essence was saying, “Pray to Me Peter. I want to hear your voice. I want to help you.”
- K. The Lord enjoys a responsive heart. He enjoys us before we mature. She is still under the tree and behind the wall when He calls her fair (beautiful). Jesus knows our heart and sees our sincere desire to obey. He knows that our immature love will mature in time as hers does (Song 4:7).

VIII. PRAYING FOR DELIVERANCE FROM COMPROMISE

- A. The maiden responds to Jesus' exhortation to see her face and hear her voice as she prays for deliverance. She cries out for Jesus' help to catch the little foxes of compromise in her life.
¹⁵Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes. (Song 2:15)
- B. Foxes are cunning animals that will destroy a vineyard under cover of the night. They are not bold strong lions that attack during the day. They are small, fast, and crafty and are hard to catch.
- C. The "little foxes" in the vineyard of our heart speak of our small compromises that include fear, sinful thoughts, attitudes, words, and the small yet continual misuse of time and money. This is not referring to defiance of the Word, but to her fear to "to arise" (Song 2:13).
- D. Our vine refers to our fellowship with God. The tender grapes speak of her immaturity in life. She is keeping her vineyard in contrast to Song 1:6. The foxes keep destroying her fruitfulness.
- E. The maiden longs to go deep in God. She cried out that the Lord would sustain and refresh her because she was lovesick (Song 2:5). It is the little areas in our lives that hold us back from walking in the Spirit. She sees the seriousness of small areas that prevent her from going deep in God.
- F. We want more in God than just avoiding scandalous sin. We want our vineyard to be full of mature fruit. The issues of unwholesome speech, unclean thoughts, and attitudes that resist servanthood and humility are the little foxes that destroy our intimacy with the Lord. Jesus is calling her out of the comfort zone, but the little foxes are destroying her vineyard.
- G. She prayed, "Catch us the foxes." In other words, we cannot catch them by ourselves but we cry for God's help. She acknowledges the presence of the little foxes (her compromise) in her life and then offers continual prayer for help. The Lord is so willing to help us.

IX. SHE EXPRESSES HER SINCERE LOVE FOR JESUS

¹⁶My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies. (Song 2:16)

- A. She states her spiritual identity. She knows who she is as a lover of God. When we struggle, we do not cease to be a genuine lover of God nor do we cease to be loved by God. Our face does not cease to be beautiful to God and our voice in worship does not become offensive to Him.
- B. She sees Jesus as her Beloved or the One she loves. She declares, "I am His." Jesus' ownership over her heart will eventually be seen in her life. Her heart is His; it belongs to Him. Her love for God is expressed in the midst of her stumbling. She does not feel cast aside by the Lord because of her struggle. She is not a hopeless hypocrite. Her confidence is steadfast. She cries, "I know You are mine and that am Yours. I am not drawing back." She is sincere yet not mature.

- C. She asks Jesus to feed her several times (Song 1:7, 12; 2:4-5). Now, Jesus wants to feed her in a costly place among the lilies, the place of her obedience and purity. Lilies speak of purity (Song 2:1-2; 5:3, 13; 6:2-3). She knows that her life purpose is to live in the purity of the lily in every area of her life and to catch all the little foxes (Song 2:1-2).
- D. In Song 2:1, “I am the lily of the valley,” the lily is in the singular as she discovers her personal identity in the Lord. However, here the lilies are in the plural as they speak of the corporate people of God who love Jesus like she does.

³³***Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.”*** ³⁴***Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some [in the congregation] do not have the knowledge of God. (1 Cor. 15:33-34)***

X. HER PAINFUL COMPROMISE

- A. She now gives her answer to Jesus’ command to arise to join Him on the mountains (Song 2:13). She refuses to rise up. Instead, she tells Him to turn and leap on the mountains as a gazelle without her. She refuses to obey Him because of fear due to her immaturity not rebellion.
¹⁷***Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bether. (Song 2:17)***
- B. With deep sadness she acknowledges that Jesus must go and be like the gazelle of Song 2:8. At the end of the Song, she calls out for Jesus again to be like a gazelle or a young stag (Song 8:14).
- C. She acknowledges the dark shadows in her heart. These are areas of her life that are not fully in the light. The day break comes in the morning when new light is present. It is the time when the dark shadows or the gray areas in her life are gone.
- D. She says to turn and go until the light of day breaks so as to provide her new light in a new day.
- E. In Song 4:6, she eventually obeys as she arises to go with Jesus to the mountain. In this verse, Jesus answers her prayer by catching this “fox of fear” in her life. We are created to live in the high places with Jesus in the extravagant devotion of bridal partnership.
- F. She understands that her compromise will lead to fruit in her vineyard being destroyed, or in separation of her intimacy with God. Jesus turns and goes for a season. Jesus honors our voluntary decision to draw back. Our relationship with Jesus is based on voluntary love.
- G. The word *bether* in the Hebrew means “separation.” Some Bible translations use the word “separation” instead of *bether*. The mountains are the obstacles that bring separation. She acknowledges that there will be a separation as Jesus goes to “the mountains of separation.” In Song 3:1, He separates from her until she repents and cries out in obedience (Song 3:2).
- H. She knows that her weakness does not mean that her love for Jesus is false. She continues to call Him “my Beloved Jesus.”

XI. FOUR KEY STATEMENTS OF PROGRESSION

- A. There are four times in the Song where you are going to see a phrase repeated. The Lord is causing a progression of maturity to take place in her life and it is important to look over these verses in order to become familiar with it.
- B. The Song describes her progression from being self-centered to being God-centered in four key statements. Four times throughout the book she changes and redefines her experience. She starts from being only self-conscious and ends up with a mature God-centeredness. We can follow her maturity throughout the Song through these four statements that are in strategic places. They are statements of the progression of her maturity. Notice the transition from a self-centered to a God-centered focus in the four inheritance statements (1:14; 2:16; 6:3; 7:10). In the beginning stages, her own enjoyment of Jesus is her only focus. She talks about what He is to her without much awareness of what she is to Him. In 2:16 and 6:3 and then finally 7:10, she uses this same language but changes the order to express her concern about what she is to Jesus. Jesus is her inheritance.
- C. Her initial focus is **only** upon her spiritual pleasure. This is acceptable to Jesus as a beginning place in the grace of God. Her only focus is that she is loved and has an inheritance in Him. She has little regard at this stage for His inheritance in her.

¹³*My beloved is to me... (1:13-14)*

- D. In her second focus she is saying, “He is mine, He belongs to me. However, I now realize that I also belong to Him.” She now adds a new dimension of His ownership of her life. She now sees the necessity of loving Him because she is His inheritance. However, it is her secondary concern at this stage of maturity.

¹⁶*My beloved is mine and I am his. (2:16)*

- E. In her third focus she is saying the same words as 2:16, but she changes the order. She says, “I belong to Him and I continue to acknowledge that He is still mine. He belongs to me. My beloved is mine.” The third progression says the same two truths but the order changes. She says, “It is His agenda first and my agenda second.” She reverses the priority of her concern. His inheritance in her is now first in her heart. Her inheritance in Him is vital, yet secondary.

³*I am my beloved’s and he is mine. (6:3)*

- F. In her fourth and final focus she is saying, “I belong to Him and what He desires is all I focus on. The fact that His desire is for me makes me want to make sure that I am 100 percent His. He owns me entirely. His concerns are what I care about most.”

¹⁰*I am my beloved’s and his desire is toward me. (7:10)*