

Session 18: The Ultimate 2-Fold Test of Maturity

Song of Solomon 5:2-9 will be the focus of our study tonight. We are on session eighteen in a twenty-four part series on the Song of Solomon. We are working through it verse-by-verse.

We are going to start first with a short review of the passage just before the passage Song of Solomon 5:2-9. That is Song of Solomon 4:16, just a verse or two before when the bride was crying out for the increase of God's presence in her life.

REVIEW: THE BRIDE'S CRY FOR THE INCREASE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

We covered this just briefly in the last class. This is the turning point of the whole book—Song of Solomon 4:16—she cries out in prayer, “Awake, O north winds” (Song 4:16). She is talking about the winds of adversity, the north winds. She is not afraid of difficulty, as she is essentially saying, “Allow the north winds to come.” That is a courageous prayer: “Come, o south winds”—those are the winds of blessing (Song of Songs 4:16). That is an easy prayer. She said, “Blow upon the garden of my heart” (Song of Songs 4:16, paraphrased).

Why? That its spices, that the fragrance of God, the presence of God would be released through her life. The Lord Himself would take pleasure in the fragrance or the spice of the grace of God flowing in her life. Then she goes onto be really specific: “Let my Beloved, let Jesus, come into His garden, and eat its pleasant fruits. Now you will notice in this passage that it moves, in her mind, from her life being her garden to her heart, and life being His garden. The first four chapters of this eight-chapter love song; she is focused on her garden, her inheritance, her blessing, and her experience in the presence of God. What is working for her? What feels right in the presence of God? That is a legitimate way to begin our life in God.

HER LIFE BECOMES “HIS” GARDEN, AS JESUS HAS AN INHERITANCE IN US

The first four chapters of the book are focused on her inheritance in Jesus. But there is more to the kingdom of God than we have an inheritance in Him. He also has an inheritance in us.

We want something from Him. That is biblical, the grace of God, forgiveness, eternal life, a lot of other things in this age, and the age to come, but He wants something from us. We are His inheritance. He wants voluntary lovers who are equally yoked to Him in love. So in this prayer of chapter 4:16, and this is one of the grand, high prayers of the whole Word of God. Where she feels the courage, of which we would normally by our natural mind have fear to pray this prayer with courage, “Let the north winds come” (Song 4:16, paraphrased). In other words, “Lord if there is a test that you have that will make my life closer to you, then release that test.”

Now, we are not talking about inviting the devil to attack us. When the devil attacks us, we rebuke him in the Name of Jesus. We tell him to go, but we are talking about a divinely orchestrated time of testing that is for the express purpose of our life maturing that the fragrance of God grows in our garden, in our life, in the garden of our heart, and that we live more as His inheritance, in a more full way, not only focusing on receiving our inheritance.

We always want to receive our inheritance. It is not like we graduate from one and go to the other, but in our early days in the Lord, all that we are focused on is our inheritance. Most believers have very little revelation that they are the inheritance that the Father has promised the Son. In Ephesians 1:18, Paul prayed that “the eyes of our heart would be opened,” that we would see Song of Solomon 4:16. That we would see that we are the inheritance of Jesus Christ. When that happens, something dynamic happens in our heart.

When we begin to view our life as belonging to Him, as His inheritance, the inheritance that He has special delight in. The confidence that she has to pray this prayer comes from the truth revealed in Song of Solomon 4, throughout the entire chapter.

We have looked at that the last two classes. I would encourage you to review those notes, and those verses because we will never have the courage to pray for the north winds to blow unless we understand the affection that God has for us, unless we have confidence in His love, that He loves us, and that He takes our love for Him serious. When we have confidence in this reality, then we want more of it to be manifest in our life. We want more of the experience of the love of God, and we want to give ourselves to Him in a more pure and mature way.

I want to challenge you to take Song of Solomon 4:16, and make it a personal part of your prayer life. Paragraph B, as I mentioned is the turning part of the Song. The first four chapters are focused on what she gets from the Lord. The next four chapters are focused on what the Lord gets from her. Both of them are valid in our entire relationship with the Lord in time and eternity. Even in eternity, we will rejoice in the inheritance that we receive from Him. Even now we can begin to understand, think, plan and carry our heart in light of the fact that we are His inheritance.

JESUS CALLS HER TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF SUFFERING (SONG OF SONGS 5:2)

Song of Solomon 5:1, which is the next verse after Song of Solomon 4:16, nine times Jesus uses the pronoun “My.” In other words she says, “I want to be your garden,” and in chapter 5:1, He comes in and takes possession and says, “you are Mine, you are Mine, you are Mine, you are Mine.” Her life from that place forward begins to be an expression of Jesus inheritance, and she begins to live in a whole new level of consecration and devotion to Him. Nine times Jesus uses the pronoun “My.” With this prayer in place, as we sing the song, do whatever it takes. Beloved, that is a good prayer. In the natural, that is a scary prayer, just with a natural mind.

We are praying to a zealous God, who is in love with us, and wants us to be in love with Him and to express it with all of our heart. The prayer, “do whatever it takes.” We sing other songs here at IHOP like, “take away everything that gets in the way”—that is the same thing as praying “awake o north winds”. That is a cool song, a great poster, but it is a really intense prayer to say before a jealous God who takes you serious. I encourage you to really look at this. To say, God, I want to go there. I want to go there. Well, what happens in Roman numeral II, Jesus says, “okay you want the north winds?”

She might have responded, “and the south winds Lord. I did not just say only the north winds.”

Jesus asks, “You want my fragrance to be released or the spice of God to be released in a greater way in your life?”

“Yes.”

“You want me to remove everything that gets in the way?”

“Yes.”

“Good,” Jesus might say, and then He stands before her with another revelation of Himself. He gives eight different revelations of Himself in the Song of Solomon. This is the sixth one. The sixth revelation: He stands before her as the Jesus of Gethsemane, and He calls her to the fellowship of suffering.

**“I MAY KNOW HIM...AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS”
(PHIL. 3:10)**

The fellowship of suffering from Philippians 3:10, Paul the apostle said, “I might know Him and the power of the resurrection and the fellowship of suffering.” The fellowship of suffering is just that. It is fellowship. It is connection, and experience of His heart by the Holy Spirit. It is not suffering for the sake of suffering. Some groups get into suffering as an end in itself. Some people get into suffering because they want to earn God’s favor. Other people get into suffering so that they can display how hard their life is. There are all kinds of approaches that people have to suffering.

The one that Paul had was not some kind of morbid delight in suffering, or wanting to show himself forth as a man of a hard life and difficulty, for self-pity and for vain glory. It was not that sort of thing. Paul wanted fellowship with the risen Christ. He is saying, “Jesus, I want to experience dimensions of who you are. In this place, I want to know what you, as a perfect sinless man, who went through in the will of God in the realm of suffering, and I want to touch that a little bit.” Obviously we are not sinless, but if He did it without ever deserving it, I am talking about just the suffering of standing against the kingdom of darkness even. Paul wanted to identify this. He wanted to experience things in Jesus’ heart that only standing in difficulty with faith and obedience, only in that way, could we experience that dimension of communion with His heart.

Now the church in the West, I throw myself in there. We have very little understanding of the intimacy that comes when we as individuals and the Lord are connecting in this place. We see the value, we esteem the nearness, and the dearness that is in His heart toward us, when we are standing true because of love for Him, and for His kingdom. The Western church, we so disdain any discomfort. That the idea of suffering just becomes a doctrine that we resist, but there is a

fellowship of suffering that Paul walked in. There is an intimacy with God's heart that comes by staying true in obedience and faith in a place of difficulty.

JESUS CALLS HER TO OPEN HER HEART FOR HIS, AS HE KNOCKS

She says, "I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my Beloved" (Song of Songs 5:2). Here He comes again. Several times He comes like in chapter 2:8: "Behold, the voice of my Beloved. Here He comes, and He is about to speak something to her.

When the voice of the Beloved, John said the voice of the Bridegroom. The voice of her Beloved is the voice of the Bridegroom God (John 3:29). She says, "I hear His voice, and He is coming. He is knocking, but He is also talking to me. He is asking me something. He is knocking on the door of my heart and He is asking me something. Here is what He is saying, 'Open up for me. Open for me. I want you and me to experience a new dimension together, but I will not force you to open your heart to me in this.'"

Beloved, the Holy Spirit, in different measures speaks to us on behalf of Jesus. It is cry of Jesus by the Spirit: "Mike, open your heart to me in this. Do not resist me. Do not just tolerate this season. Open to me and talk to me and let me meet you in this time of difficulty. I want to bring you forward into a new dimension." That is what the voice of the Bridegroom says. He says, "Open to me."

Then He speaks to her with four different names. He calls her, "My sister, my bride, my dove, and my perfect one" (Song 5:2). All four of those names are significant. These are the names the Lord speaks to us, when He is wooing us to arise in love, and to open to Him, to go forward in the grace of God even though it will involve difficulty, challenges, and the need for perseverance.

THE BRIDE RESPONDS TO JESUS IN FULL OBEDIENCE (SONG 5:3-5)

Then He reveals Himself as the Jesus of Gethsemane, He says, "My head is covered with the dew of the night. My locks, or my hair, covered with the drops of the night" (Song 5:3-5 paraphrased). There is only one way that your hair is covered, and wet with the nighttime dew. That is by being out in the long and dark, lonely night. It is the Jesus of Gethsemane, the Jesus who was in the garden before the Lord in that night before. He is revealing Himself as the Jesus of Gethsemane.

She responds in obedience. Some commentators, and I understand why, but I think it is a misunderstanding what is going on, they interpret this passage as she compromises. But she is not compromising. She responds in full obedience. I believe it is important to understand that because you will miss the entire flow of this passage. If she is compromising, then this passage has an entirely different interpretation. If she is obedient, then we can relate to Jesus in this passage in a whole different way than if she is compromising. She responds in obedience, verse three to five of chapter five.

THE ULTIMATE TWO-FOLD TEST

Then, she experiences the ultimate two-fold test, which is the release of the North Winds in her life. The first test, Jesus draws His presence from her. He withdraws His presence from her for a brief season while she is obedient. She has done nothing wrong. He withholds His presence from her to see if she will be true in love without the benefit and pleasure of feeling good in His sight. Will she do it for Him? Or is she only seeking Him so that she may feel good in His presence. Is Jesus a means to an end? Or is He that goal? Is He the end of our life?

The next test is that the spiritual authorities in chapter 5:7 strike her, wound her, and take her veil away, her covering. She loses her function, her place and her anointing in the Body of Christ in her ministry. The reason this is so big because the very beginning of the book, she only had two great prayers. In Song of Solomon 1:4, she wanted to experience His presence, “draw me after you.” She said she wanted to be effective in ministry: “let us run together” (Song 1:4). That is a reference to ministry.

Her life vision consisted of two main things: I want to feel your presence, experience your presence, and I want to partner with you in bringing the power and goodness of God to others. That is a great life vision: to experience God, and then to bring that experience to other people, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in partnership with the Holy Spirit. What Jesus is going to do is the two things that she cares most about. He is going to cause them to be temporarily withheld from her. His question to her is this: Are you serving me so that you can feel good in my presence? How many of you love to feel the presence of God? I love it. There is nothing that we love more than feeling loved by God, and feeling the power to love Him back. That is the most dynamic reality that the human spirit can experience. Feeling God’s love, feeling love and feeling love back. There is nothing more delightful than that. She goes on and on about that in Song of Solomon 2:3-4, His

banner over me is love, I am at the banqueting table, sustain me, refresh me, I am lovesick.

HER GREATEST DESIRE IS TO EXPERIENCE GOD’S PRESENCE

I mean, she is having the time of her life feeling the presence of God. That is a great thing. Then she wants to be anointed in ministry, particularly in the last four chapters of the book actually, the last two chapters of the book. The two things that she wants most is to feel and experience His presence, and to be useful, to have an anointed, meaningful function in the Body—both of them are temporarily withheld from her.

The Lord says to her, “Are you in this relationship with me, for me, or only for you? As long as you feel my presence and your ministry goes good and circumstances work right, you will worship me. Is that right? What if circumstances do not go well, are you still mine?”

That is the central issue. Because, is Jesus a means to an end? Yes, He is the way that we get what we want. I want eternal life. There is no other way that I can get it. He gives it to me. He is a means to that end. I love it. But He is more than a means to an end.

There is another dimension of our relationship where He is the end. He is the reason. If our hearts are in love with Him, if the first commandment is in first place in our lives, and it is overflowing in the second commandment as we love other people. When love is burning and alive in our hearts, beloved, we have already won and succeeded in what our life is about.

Whether we feel it or whether our ministry is well known and successful in the eyes of men, we are already successful if our heart is burning in love. Also, Jesus, the voice that He spoke to her, He goes, it is the voice of my beloved in Song of Solomon 5:2

OPEN FOR ME

Here is His message. His message is one sentence: “Open for me.” That is the message. Open your heart to me. Not just to my blessings, open to the Jesus of Gethsemane. He is not just saying the Jesus of forgiveness, the Jesus of healing, the Jesus of provision—that Jesus is easy to open to. How about the Jesus who will do the will of God, regardless of what it will cost us, no stings attached? That is a whole different face of Jesus. I am just going to say it honestly. This is a very easy message to preach. I look at this, and I say, “My goodness.” I am talking about my

own life. I am saying, “Lord, I need to up this thing in my own life, I am getting convicted. I want to say “yes” to Jesus. I want to open to the Jesus of Gethsemane”—the Jesus whose hair is drenched with the dew of the night—the Jesus of the dark and lonely night. Not just the Jesus who provides all things, and makes my life happier. He does that plenty of times, but there are times that He will withhold some things to draw forth the true cry of our heart to bring it to a red heart, burning flame so to speak.

This is the very thing that Jesus spoke to John the apostle, when He said, “Go speak to the Laodiceans” in Revelations 3:20. When He says go tell them this, Jesus is nearly quoting Song of Solomon 5:2. It is the same language. It is the same invitation, and it ends up as the same promise. Revelation 3:20: He stands at the door and knocks. He is basically saying, “If you will hear my voice and open the door of your heart, I will come into you in my timing, in my way, and I will dine with you. Meaning that we will have deep communion with one another.” This is what is happening to the Shulamite Bride. Jesus is saying to her, “Open your heart” because she is saying that I have heard the voice of my Beloved, and this is what He said to me, open up. Jesus is saying the same thing in Revelations 3:20 (paraphrased): “open up to me, and I will come to you and I will dine with you. We will have intimate fellowship at the table. I will be near you. But I want you to open your heart to me as the Jesus of Gethsemane.”

Of course, that intimacy that she would have was just delayed a short season, but it was delayed because Jesus wanted to bring to the head the real issues in her heart. So many times, and I do not mean it is hypocrisy and that it is meaningless, but it is so easy to say, “take everything away that gets in the way Lord.” It is so easy to say that “I only want you.” The Holy Spirit is wooing us, and is saying, “If that becomes more true than it is now, you will experience such depths of God’s heart.” Beloved, there is a dimension of God that we cannot experience expect we go through the doorway of Song of Solomon chapter five.

A lot of folks are content to stop at Song of Solomon chapter two: the banqueting table, His banner over me is love, singing worship songs about love which I want to do forever, just feeling refreshed and loved and just kind of going about their business. It is all about them, and how they are feeling and how things are going. Beloved, there is a whole lot more in God’s heart than Song of Solomon chapter two, though I do not ever want to ever minimize it. I love Song of Solomon chapter two, and I am going to live there forever, but I want to embrace the Jesus of

chapter five, and I want to go on to chapter six to eight—the fruitful ministry in Song of Solomon in chapter seven to eight.

JESUS EMPOWERS HER TO OPEN BY CALLING HER FOUR NAMES

Top of page two, paragraph F. Jesus empowers her to open to Him by calling her four names. Beloved, these are four names that the Holy Spirit will speak to you. Now you do not have to use these exact names, it may be the truths.

MY SISTER

It is four truths that these four names are pointing to. But even as a confession of the Word in a time of difficulty, we can declare these: “Lord, I am your sister, your love, your dove, your perfect one” (Song 5:2). Again, it is important to understand the meaning of these four names. It is the truth that we are talking about, not just the language. When He says, “You are my sister,” He is identifying with her humanity. He is saying to her: “I was a man tempted in all things. I am a sympathetic High Priest, and I understand your plight. I really do. Open to me.”

When He is saying “my sister,” He could be saying: “open to me, and know that I do understand your plight as a human being. That is a huge statement right there.” In my personal confession to the Lord, I switch it over and say, “I am your brother.” I just go ahead and update it. The real point of it is that you do understand my plight, and I open my heart knowing that you will be tender to me because you are sympathetic. You have known me as a fellow human being. You know how difficult my plight is. What a great motivational, prophetic name to give her as He is wooing her to this new openness.

MY LOVE

He says, “My love” (Song 5:2) He motivates us by His tender love—affection-based obedience. Grace motivation. I have a paragraph on that, and you can read that on your own. When Jesus woos us to open to Him to go deeper in this realm in the north wind, we need to be confessing all the way through it: “I am the one you love. I am the one you love. I am a fellow human being. I am your brother. I am your sister. You understand me. I know you understand me. You have not forgotten me and I am the one that you love.”

MY DOVE

He goes on to the third confession that is very important as we are going through difficulties, and as our heart is getting more emboldened to go forward with the

Lord: “My dove” (Song 5:2). Now the dove speaks of the single mindedness of loyalty. It speaks of no compromise. But it also speaks of the person that has single mindedness because they are connecting with the dove, the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, we cannot live this way without an ongoing fellowship with the Holy Spirit. We have to be connecting to the Spirit. We have to be spiritual people, not just moral people. It is not enough to make right choice that is important to make right choice. We make right choices because we are encountering the supernatural realm. We are encountering a person who is supernatural who lives in us.

There is a “dove” dimension to going forward into this new walk with the Lord—to not being afraid of the north winds. Yes, we want the singleness of mind of the dove, but we want the supernatural dimension. We want to be spiritual people who need the supernatural dimension in our walk with God. It is not just enough to be Christians who obey the creeds. I love the creeds. We obey the creeds. But we need to interact with the Spirit in the journey.

MY PERFECT ONE

The fourth one, a very significant one, He calls her “my perfect one” (Song 5:2). Now this is one of the key reasons, though there are five to six reasons, why I feel very confident that she is obeying the Lord in this passage, as opposed to some commentaries that she is disobeying the Lord in this passage. He calls her, “my perfect one” before the test, which is going to come in, verse six to seven. He says you are “my perfect one” (Song 5:2). After the test in Song of Solomon 6:9, He says, “you are my perfect one” (Song 5:2). On both sides of the test, He speaks the same words to her. Perfect means mature. She has refused all compromise.

THE BRIDE RESPONDS IN FULL OBEDIENCE (SONG 5:3-5)

Roman numeral III. It is only because of verse three that some commentators think this is her compromising. In Song of Solomon 5:3 she says: “I have taken off my robe, how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet, how can I defile them?”

They would read it, and understand it. She is complaining of the inconvenience about getting out of bed, but the whole passage is in the deep language of responsive love. The entire language is in the passage of responsive love because to settle the issue, she says: “My Beloved” (Song 5:4). Jesus put His hand on the latch of the door of her heart, and her heart leaped for Him. She is not resisting Him. Her heart is wowed, and wooed by Him, and by His voice. She says in verse

five, to settle it for once and for all: “I arose.” She is saying, “I got up and I obeyed you. I opened my heart for my Beloved. I did open.”

He said, “Open” in Song of Solomon 5:2. In verse five, is the clear statement of her obedience (paraphrased): “I arose and I opened my heart, exactly what you asked me, and my hands were dripped with myrrh and on the handles of the lock.”

THE BRIDE ARISES IN OBEDIENCE TO OPEN HER HEART TO JESUS

Paragraph A. The bride instantly arises in obedience in verse five. Her heart yearns for Him in verse four. She arose to go and meet Him in verse five. Then again, I just love to confirm this point that in chapter six, we will look at this. It is really awesome, chapter six, verse four to five. It is the passage where He says, “You are as beautiful as Tirzah, you are as lovely as Jerusalem. You are as awesome as an overcoming army. He says, turn your eyes away from me, for your look of love has overwhelmed my heart. You have overcome me in love” (Song of Solomon 6:4-5).

He spoke in the ultimate language of love to her because she obeyed Him in the midst of this difficult test. I am getting ahead of myself. This is a couple classes from now, but I love chapter 6:4-5. Because this is where this whole thing is going. He does not discipline her. He says (paraphrased), “You have overwhelmed me with your gaze of devotion. You are beautiful, you are lovely, you are the victorious army, you have warred against all the forces of darkness, and you stayed true to me when you felt nothing.”

This is the inheritance He is looking for. We are clothed with “a robe of righteousness” (Isa 61:10). Our righteousness, our robes are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). What she is saying is,

“I have taken off my robes. I have put on your robes. I have washed my feet like Jesus did to Peter.”

He says, “I have washed your feet. I will never live in compromise and defilement again. I am done with that way. That is what she is saying. She is making a statement of resolve that she will never go back.

Zechariah 3:1-5, Joshua the high priest, he walks this out. He has his dirty garments. He lays them aside and he puts on the new garments. He walks out this dynamic of Song of Solomon 5:3. He takes off the dirty robes and puts on the new ones. She is making a statement; I will never ever go back to living in compromise.

It will never happen again. “My feet are washed, they are cleansed. I am never going back to that path again where I go to the right and to the left. I am walking in the robes of your righteousness. I am girded with the garments of salvation.”

THE HAND OF GOD RELEASES GRACE ON THE LATCH AND LOCK

Paragraph C, top of page 3. Now the hand of God, my Beloved Jesus, she says in Song of Solomon 5:4. He put His hand upon the door of my heart and my heart leaped. Jesus is putting His hand upon her heart, releasing the grace of God upon her.

In Acts 11:21-23, the grace of God, and the hand of God is identified together. When the hand of God is being extended, it is the manifestation of grace. That is what Acts 11:21-22 tells us.

The Lord puts His hand on the door of our heart. He helps us to unlock our heart. Our heart is naturally locked, restrained and resistant to going forward in this way, but He puts His hand upon the door of our heart.

That He will touch us and we can say, “I am willing to be made willing. Help me. Help me. I want to go all the way. I want to go to the mountain of myrrh. I want to go the full distance. Help me. Put your hand upon my heart like you did the Shulamite like you did in Song of Solomon 5:4. Touch the lock of my heart by your hand and help me.”

Then she arose in verse five and fully obeyed Him. Verse four is the cry for help or the experience of divine help. She is yearning.

FIRST TEST: JESUS WITHDRAWS HIS PRESENCE FROM HER (SONG 5:6)

In verse five, she obeys Him. Roman numeral IV. Let us look at the first test. We have already mentioned it in verse six. “I opened for my Beloved, but my Beloved had turned away, and was gone” (Song 5:6). This is an entirely new experience for her. I mean, throughout the Song of Solomon, when she sought the Lord, I mean, she is under the apple tree, His banner over me is love, she is at the table eating apples and having the best time, His presence is all over her, and the manifest presence. She says, “Wait, I opened.” Verse six: “I did what you told me. I did open.” Verse 5: “I arose,” and verse 6: “I opened.” I did what you asked me to do in verse two, which she can say. She is not disobedient at all. There is no trace of disobedience or compromise in this passage. She then basically says, “But I am

shocked, my Beloved turned away, meaning His manifest presence is lifted. My heart leaped when He spoke because just a verse earlier, my heart yearned in verse four. Now, my heart now leaps.”

She is remembering. She basically is saying (Song of Songs 5:6, paraphrased): “Wait. I said yes. I even remember my heart jumped when you said ‘open up to me.’ I said “yes” in verse two. In verse four, my heart leaped. I loved it. I said yes, I responded to you and I sought you. I added a little bit more prayer and fasting. I could not find you. I called out more. ‘Lord, Lord.’ He gave me no answer of what is going on.”

THE LORD HIDES HIMSELF FROM HER ON TWO OCCASSIONS (SONG 3:1-2, 5:6)

Paragraph A. The Lord hides Himself from the bride on two occasions in the Song of Solomon for two entirely different reasons. In this passage, He is hiding Himself in a temporary way, meaning she cannot feel His presence in the way she is used to. The Lord does it while she is responding in full obedience. She is fully in a posture of responsive love. The other time the Lord’s face turned away from her, and she could not feel His presence was for a very different reason in chapter 3:1-2. That was because she was disobeying the Lord. It was discipline to wake her up. This is not discipline.

Paragraph B, in Song of Solomon chapter five, He calls her “my perfect one” (Song 5:2). He says that her heart opened to Him, her heart yearned for Him, and of course (in verse 6) “my heart opened again. It says that she arose and obeyed Him. In verse eight, she says “I am lovesick” (Song 5:8). She is experiencing a very new thing. She is responding to the Lord, but the Lord is not responding to her in the way that she would expect Him to.

JESUS PROMISES NOT TO LEAVE OR FORSAKE US (HEBREWS 13:5)

Paragraph D, the Lord promised to never leave or forsake us. He never leaves us in the sense that His eyes are always attentive to us. Never is there a moment that His eyes are not attentive to us. Never is there a moment when His presence, the Holy Spirit, is not living in us. His eyes are attentive to us, He is carefully watching, and His presence lives in us. So it is true.

He never leaves us. However, that is a different reality in this age from the sensible, discernable feelings of His presence. Sometimes, even for a fully

responsive believer, He will draw back some of the manifest, discernable senses of His presence in order to bring her love to maturity.

To cause her humility, and her fervency to come to a deeper level. He says, “Come after me. Come after me.”

She responds, “I cannot find you.”

He says, “Come on, just keep coming. Keep coming.” It brings her to a whole new level of purity in her love because we have to work the muscle ten thousand times. When we do not feel the Lord’s presence, here is the muscle we have to work. It is like an exercise we have to do over and over. We say, why am I seeking you if I do not feel you.

The Holy Spirit whispers to you: “You are seeking Him because you belong to Him, and you are His inheritance.”

We think: “Oh, oh that is right. I keep forgetting that. I am His inheritance. That is why I am seeking you. Yes. Yes. I am your inheritance. Yes. I am coming after you. I love you. I will obey you. Wait, I do not feel you. Why am I seeking you anyway? I do not feel you.”

“Because you are His inheritance.”

“Oh yeah, that is right. I am your inheritance. I will obey you. I love you. I will do what is right. Why am I seeking you anyway? I do not feel you.”

How many of you have worked that muscle ten thousand times. Just over and over and over and over again. It is the working of that muscle that establishes that reality, and it is greater and greater and greater, and it causes our love to be purified. This is part of the Gethsemane. This is part of the fellowship of suffering. Jesus—the Father turned His face away from Him on the cross when Jesus said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” (Mt. 27:46)?

Jesus responds, “I know that feeling. I was in the perfect will of God. I did nothing wrong. It was in His will. Now there is a different application, but He knows that feeling for sure.”

He says, “Oh, I am sympathetic, my sister. I know what you are going through. Who knows all the dimensions of what He experienced in His thirty-three years in the flesh?”

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Paragraph E. The catholic contemplative, top of page four, in the middle ages. They had a phrase. It is not a biblical phrase. I believe it is a biblical concept. Of course, some of them had different definitions.

One guy defined it this way, another guy defined it that way, so you want to be careful with this term because there are so many definitions. The idea, they called it, the dark night of the soul.

Here is the part that is biblical: I do not mean the phrase it, the idea that we can obey the Lord with full responsive love, and still end up being tested by the Lord in the midst of fully responsive love, and even be in a season where His presence is withheld. We have done nothing wrong at all.

That is biblical. I do not recommend that we identify it with dark night of the soul because you will end up getting twenty different definitions. A lot of them did not even agree with each other, they all had their own version of it. So do not go there. But it is such colorful language: the dark night of the soul.

JOB WAS A RIGHTEOUS MAN WHO WAS AFFLICTED

Paragraph F. Job went through that. Here is what the Lord said in Job 1:8, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” How would you like to have the Lord say this about you? Look at the second part of verse eight: The Lord said to Satan—this is the part that you do not want Him to say—“hey Satan, have you considered my servant Job?”

You do not want that part if you can help it in the natural. This is what the Lord said about Job. There is no man like him on the earth. What a sentence from God. Here is what God said. He is blameless. He fears God and he turns away from evil. God said this about Job. How would you like God to say that about you? Wow.

It is the other part. Have you considered him Satan? But look at the end of the book of Job. Job was fully obedient before this trial. He was responding in love. He was blameless from God’s point of view (Job 42:5).

At the end of the whole story, when it has all come and gone, Job said (Job 42:5, paraphrased), “I have heard of you Father,” using New Testament language: “Now my eyes have seen you. Now, I know you face to face. I only knew of you, but now I know you because I walked through something, and held onto you through it.” He had difficulties through the time, but now he says, “I know you, I know you.”

Then Job says, “The Lord doubled all the blessing in his life.” That would be an Old Testament version of the dark night of the soul. Another one is King David. King David is worshipping God, the favor of God is on him, he is in his early twenties, and he is in Saul’s court. He is loving God, and walking in honor, wisdom, and integrity, then Saul chases him for seven years to kill him, and David cannot feel the presence of God several times.

He writes the psalms complaining. He gets in despair and he makes a bunch of wrong decisions. He is in this place of testing, and all he was doing before was faithfully walking in obedience, integrity, and worshipping God.

Then he finds himself in this season. Joseph is the same. He has done nothing wrong that is recorded in scripture. He finds himself in a pit. He obeys God. He gets out of the pit. He keeps obeying God. He turns away Potiphar’s wife as she makes these attempts of adultery. He goes into another pit. He has done nothing but obey, and he is in two pits. But he is on his way to a throne. How do you get in a pit? The Lord is training him, and He is raising Him up. The stories go on and on and on.

SECOND TEST: THE BRIDE IS PERSECUTED AND REJECTED (SONG 5:7)

The second test. We know this one too: This is not the Lord turning His face, this is the church, particularly the leadership in the church, mistreats her in Song 5:7, persecutes and rejects her. She loses her place of function.

Remember in the first part of the book. What are the two things that she wanted? I want to experience your presence, and I want a place of function that has your blessing on it. The watchmen, the leaders, strike her and they wound her, and they take her covering away, and her veil. She cannot function. She is not welcome. She has papers written against her, and people whispering against her. She says, “I

cannot feel pleasure in the midst of the people, and I cannot feel pleasure in my prayer closet. I cannot feel pleasure anywhere.”

HER RESPONSE OF HUMILITY AND LOVE (SONG 5:8)

Roman numeral VI, as we come to the end of this. We see her humility. We see her response. She goes to the immature daughters of Jerusalem, and she says this: They are far less experienced in God than she is. She goes to the new believer’s class. She says, “You can help me with this.” I am serious. Her humility.

When people get humiliated, they go into isolation. They get bitter. They do not want anything to do with Christianity. They do not understand that God is trying to bring them forth with spice in the garden of their heart because that is what they asked for. They say, “Anything Lord.”

The Lord says, “Okay.” Then, they get mistreated in the Body, and the presence of God is withheld, and they say, “Forget it. I am not with you God. I am just going to forget the Body, and forget you God.” I am just going to go do this other grace of God thing where I can go get drunk, do anything that I want to do, call it “grace,” and take my chances at the judgment seat.

There are thousands of Christians who live that way who are in their forties and fifties who were walking with God fresh in their twenties. I mean fiery going for revival. The way that they are living now is unthinkable because they called out for anything and everything. The Lord says, “okay,” and they got offended with God and the church.

TELL HIM I AM LOVESICK (SONG OF SOLOMON 5:8)

She says, “Go tell Him, and if you find Him, tell Him I am lovesick” (Song 5:8, paraphrased). Beloved, she is not going back into disobedience. She goes, “tell Him that I am lovesick” for who He is (Song 5:8): “I am not in it for feeling good. I am not in it for things working right. I am in it for Him. I want His presence to touch my heart. I am His garden. I want His spice in my life. Tell Him that I am lovesick. If I do not see Him again, tell Him I am in it until the end for love.”