

Love Sick for Jesus

Song of Solomon 2:5-7; Luke 10:41-42

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How do you, dear husbands and wives, know whether your relationship with one another is growing or is becoming stagnant? If it is growing, you look forward to and you find time spent together refreshing—you want it to continue, not to end. If it is becoming stagnant, you will be looking for reasons to get away from one another. There will be other places you would rather be than with one another. Whether it is communion and nearness in your Christian marriage or communion and nearness in your relationship with Jesus Christ, communion is not usually automatic. We must all work hard against the hindrances and busyness that squeeze out our time within marriage or with Jesus. But nothing will change if you are not convinced of the necessity of nearness rather than distance—of fervency rather than lukewarmness—not only union, but communion.

As a Christian, you must with holy desires pursue communion, and not stop at union. You cannot grow without blessed communion with Jesus each day. If you would rather be somewhere else when you meet with the Lord, you reveal that you are not truly communing with Him. It has become a mere duty—not loving communion. This is a significant reason why there is little or no growth in the fruit of the Spirit, why temptations are not mortified, and why there is little joy and assurance of faith. When you want that precious time with Jesus to continue (and not to end), you will know that you are truly communing with Him (Luke 10:41-42).

This is the holy and loving desire that we find exhibited in the elect bride of Jesus from our text today. The main points are: (1) Overcome with Christ's Love (Song 2:5); (2) Embraced by Christ's Love (Song 2:6); (3) Abiding in Christ's Love (Song 2:7).

I. Overcome with Christ's Love (Song 2:5).

A. Christ's chosen bride continues her ode of love to her beloved Lord Jesus. She had related in the previous verse (Song 2:4) how Jesus had taken her by the hand and had escorted her into His banqueting house (literally, a house of wine) where His banner or flag that hung so conspicuously over her was that of love—His dying love in sacrificing Himself for her, and His undying love that shall never come to an end.

1. By nature, the Christian is no better than the non-Christian. The difference between the two is not to be found in what God saw in one as opposed to the other before having chosen to redeem His elect. Both were equally vile and corrupt throughout. Both served their masters and lovers—the world, the flesh, and the devil. Neither was good or righteous. Both deserved God's eternal condemnation in hell.

2. That which alone made the difference was that God sovereignly set His love upon and chose you, His elect bride, to be His own, sent Jesus to pay the guilt and punishment for your sin, and sent His Spirit to make of you a new creation in Christ Jesus. As Paul asks and answers, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded" (Romans 3:27).

B. As the bride is seated (rather reclining) at the banqueting table and enjoying blessed communion with the Lord Jesus, she is overwhelmed with Him and her heart's desire is that this nearness to Jesus would continue unabated (Song 2:5).

1. "Stay me with flagons" (i.e. flagons of wine, Hosea 3:1). Flagons are larger pitchers that were used to fill wine cups at feasts.

a. Here the bride says, "Stay me" (i.e. sustain me and refresh me with flagons of wine). There she is reclining beside the King at His banqueting table with those banners of love unfurled over her, and her desire is that the feast of love with the Lord Jesus would continue and not end. For just as wine

was that chief refreshment at feasts of old, so Christ's love is better refreshment than wine any time (Song 1:2)—it is the best refreshment! Nothing can exhilarate and revive you from discouragement, seeming impossible trials, a broken body, besetting sins, persecution, and threats of the enemy like the wine of Christ's love. If even the love of mere mortals who care for you can turn discouragement into hope, how much more can the infinite love of the Triune God bring life out of death, hope out of despair, and joy out of tears?

b. When the bride declares, "Stay me with flagons", the verb ("stay me") is not, "Thou (in the singular) stay me with flagons of wine", but is rather, "You (in the plural) stay me with flagons of wine." It is not only the Lord Jesus that she desires to refresh her with love, but the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (John 14:23). Dear ones, is this your holy desire, that your Triune God be to you your chief joy, delight and refreshment rather than the things of this world?

c. When a sincere Christian sees how much more delight is placed in the things of this world than in Jesus Christ and His love, His gospel, His ordinances, and His commandments, the heart of the sincere Christian is grieved and cries out to the Lord, "Stay me and refresh me with flagons of the eternal and unchangeable love of Jesus Christ." The sincere Christian is not satisfied with the love this world offers. There is only one love that completely satisfies the soul of a true Christian—the immeasurable love of Jesus that will not let you go. Dear ones, be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the love of Jesus Christ.

d. The flagons that carry to your soul the love of Jesus Christ are His ordinances—prayer, the Word read and preached (both His gospel and commandments), sacraments, covenants, and psalms. How worship is transformed for us when we understand that His ordinances are the flagons or vessels which carry to us the love of Jesus Christ. How can we not then rejoice and delight in and express our thankful praise to Him in worship?

2. The bride then goes on to say, "Comfort me with apples" (Song 2:5).

a. You will recall from Song 2:3 that Jesus is the apple tree in whose shadow we alone find rest from the condemning wrath of God and from the trials, afflictions, and temptations in this world. Likewise, it is from this tree alone that we eat fruit that feeds and satisfies our souls. Picking up the same metaphor here, the bride desires to be comforted with apples—the fruit of His Spirit (especially love). Only as you eat His fruit of love for you, will you bear that fruit in your life.

b. What is not readily seen in the English verb "comfort" is that the bride does not desire an apple here or there an apple, but desires to recline at the table surrounded with apples. In other words, I desire not only one apple of your love (dear Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), but overwhelm me with them. I fear we tend to be so content with so little of Christ's love when our hearts should be ever desiring to know and see more and more of the apples of His love all around us. You have not because you ask not. You may ask the Lord for much, but do you ask Him to spread you out with the apples of His love all around you that you may understand and not miss His love that swallows you up?

3. The bride is now overwhelmed at her understanding the greatness of Christ's love for her, and she can barely contain herself: "for I am sick of love" (Song 2:5).

a. She is not tired of Christ's love. She does not loath or despise Christ's love. She is not apathetic about Christ's love. She has come to so understand the love of Jesus Christ for her that it is as if love has infected here inside and out like a disease, but this is a blessed infection of Christ's love from which she never desires to be healed. "Let it spread and spread till I am utterly consumed with this heavenly disease of Christ's sacrificial love for me." The godly and learned Samuel Rutherford was removed from the ministry and confined to the city of Aberdeen for His faithfulness to Christ's truth, and though he ached to be in the pulpit, he was comforted with the love of Jesus Christ, as he states in one of his letters (Letter CXLVIII, p. 279):

And now He [Jesus—GLP] is come again with joy, and hath been pleased to feast His exiled and afflicted prisoner with the joy of His consolations. Now I weep, but am not sad; I am chastened, but I die not; I have loss, but I want [lack—GLP] nothing; this water cannot drown me, this fire

cannot burn me, because of the good-will of Him that dwelleth in The [Burning—GLP] Bush. The worst things of Christ, His reproaches, His cross, are better than Egypt's treasures. He hath opened His door, and taken into His house-of-wine a poor sinner, and hath left me so sick of love for my Lord Jesus, that if heaven were at my disposing, I would give it for Christ, and would not be content to go to heaven, except I were persuaded that Christ were there.

b. There is nothing that will remove your fears and worries like the love of Jesus Christ. Our fears and worries only indicate we are not perfected in love—we yet need to grow in our understanding of Christ's love (1 John 4:18). Our disobedience to God's moral commandments, our flirting with temptations that have led us many times into sin, our unbelief, our apathy and lukewarmness all point to our need to be growing in our understanding of Christ's love for us. Let us cry out to the Lord, "Infect me inside and out with a true understanding of thy love for me. Open my eyes to behold it in thy Word and in the sacraments. Let me behold thy love in the singing of the Psalms and in the benediction. Remove this blindness that does not see thy love in all my daily benefits. For these are all kisses of thy love for me."

II. Embraced by Christ's Love (Song 2:6).

A. A universal expression of love and tenderness from ancient times to the present is the embrace or caress (hug). It would seem that while the King and His bride are reclining at the table of this love feast, the Lord Jesus not only expresses His love to her in words, but in deeds. He touches her and hugs her while reclining around that table. His strong and almighty hands lovingly and tenderly hold her. In a holy and godly sense, He loves you so much, dear saint, that He cannot keep His hands off of you. He treasures you as His beloved bride and wants you to know that you are His and He is yours alone.

B. The hands of the Lord Jesus that were pierced for you could crush you instantly, but because of His incomprehensible love for you, His almighty hands are guided by that love at all times for your good. Whatever befalls you, He will never use His sovereign hands to destroy you. He will use them to humble you in your pride, to prick your conscience in your rebellion, to chasten you in your disobedience, and to defend you against your enemies who would destroy you, but His hands will always be to you as a loving embrace that draws you closer to Himself. No one can pluck you from His hands (John 10:28-29). Dear Christian men, if you would be like the Lord Jesus, use your hands not to push your wives away, but rather to draw them nearer to you in love.

III. Abiding in Christ's Love (Song 2:7).

A. The bride now charges the daughters of Jerusalem (who are professing Christians, Song 1:5) not to awaken the King while He rests and reclines at the banqueting table. He has brought her to the house of wine, and there the King and His elect bride are feasting around the table, and after the feast of love the King seems to take a nap while embracing His bride.

B. It appears that the church was so delighted with being stayed with flagons and apples in the arms of Christ, that she did not want this blessed communion with Jesus to end or to be disturbed. She, therefore, gives a charge to professing believers not to disturb Him—not to interrupt her communion with Jesus. Is there anyone or anything in your life that disturbs or prevents your communion with Jesus Christ? As the bride here declares, "Do not wake my love, till he please." Dear ones, let no one or nothing in this life become more loved that you replace your communion with Jesus with that person or thing. An evidence that you are growing in your communion with Jesus is that you jealously guard that time more and more.

C. Is the bride swearing by creatures ("by the roes, and hinds of the field" Song 2:7)? No, but

rather she is solemnly charging all who may disturb this blessed communion with the Lord to act as quietly as a hunter would in not disturbing wild roes and hinds (deer), which are known to be skittish and easily disturbed at any noise.

D. What is it, dear ones, that disturbs and prevents your communion with Jesus Christ? Busyness, work, family, apathy, worldliness, besetting sin, games, pleasures etc.? I can assure you that there will be no growth in Christ without communion with Christ. There will be no growing understanding of the love of Christ without communion with Christ. What you allow to disturb your communion with Jesus has become your first love.

1. Many of us have just enjoyed the Lord's Supper and Holy Communion together around His Table of love. What would you think if while having the Lord's Supper, I decided to turn on a ballgame, or chose to get up and take care of business, or to spend time with family? Would you not think that to be blatant irreverence and scorn for the love of Jesus and a voluntary distancing myself from communion with Jesus? That may seem so clear and so graphic, but are we not doing the same by disturbing our daily communion with Jesus by many of our voluntary choices or disturbing our Lord's Day communion with Jesus by many words and deeds that He says are good on the other six days, but not on His entire day of communion and fellowship with you and you with Him?

2. I leave you with Paul's prayer for each of us: Ephesians 3:16-20. Your lack of communion with Christ is directly connected to your lack of understanding of Christ's love for you. Understanding and believing Christ's love for you who trust Him leads to blessed communion with Jesus which then leads to more love for Jesus which then leads to more communion with Jesus. That is what will make heaven, heaven—a circle of unending love and communion with Jesus Christ.

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