

Christ my Beloved – Song Series

Pursuing Christ

Text: Song of Solomon 3:1-5

Introduction:

1. The experience of the maiden in the Song experiences both a sense of **nearness** and at times a sense of **distance** from her Beloved. This parallels the experience of the N.T. believer. We are ever secure in the reality of His presence but our conscious fellowship with Him can vary.
2. Scene: The bride finds herself in a night season without the comfort of her Beloved's presence. She is moved to seek after Him afresh.
3. We will note four features of her seeking after her Beloved (Christ)

I. The Stimulation of her Quest (Vs. 1)

A. The Groom's Absence (Vs. 1a)

1. "by night" = the season where she experiences a sense of distance from her Beloved. This could picture a season of trial and test or a period of backslidden living.
2. "my bed" = contrast this with the communion and fellowship they shared in 1:13 & 16. 'myrrh' speaks of the sufferings of Christ. He is given a place in her inmost, heart affections because of His suffering love and she finds a place of rest in His presence. Now the scene has changed. She is seeking rest for herself without Him but begins to realize Christ's presence is not to be found there. She has taken her Beloved's presence in her life for granted and has become careless and occupied with self.
3. We should never doubt the fact (reality) of our Saviour's presence in our lives (Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20) but that is different to our conscious experience and enjoyment of His presence. She had not ceased to be His (2:16) but her fellowship with Him had waned.
4. Sometimes in wisdom, our Lord withdraws some of the comfort of His presence and allows us to go through a night season in order that we might be stirred to seek Him afresh; that we might be stirred to personal revival.
5. Samuel Rutherford: "But flowers need night's cool sweetness, The moonlight and the dew; So Christ from one who loved Him, His presence oft withdrew."

B. The Bride's Affection (Vs. 1b)

1. Each of these five verses contains a statement of the Bride's love for her Groom. In Vs. 1-4 we have the phrase "him whom my soul loveth" and in Vs. 5 the words "my love". Her passionate, heart-love drives her to seek after her Beloved.

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2. There is a loving impulse within the heart of the born again, blood washed believer to pursue the Lord.
 - a. 1 John 4:19 *“We love him, because he first loved us.”*
 - b. *“My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me.”*
(Ps. 63:8)

II. The Stages of her Quest (Vs. 2)

A. A Casual Seeking (Vs. 1)

1. She seeks him in her own place but does not find Him.
2. Her search results in failure – “I sought him, but found him not.” Her failure to find him does not lead to an abandonment of the search but rather strengthens her resolve to seek Him more fervently.

B. A Concentrated Seeking (Vs. 2)

1. The resolve – “I will rise now” She answers the call to awaken out of slumber. As believers we are exhorted to be spiritually awake (Rom. 13:11-14). She decides to leave the place of superficial rest.
2. The extent – “and go about the city” This is a fervent search but it again ends in failure. Christ is not to be found in the broad ways of this world – “I sought him, but I found him not.” The “broad ways” are “earthly remedies that do not reveal the Saviour.” (Masters)
3. He is found outside the city in the still and quiet place, the place of separation from the world (Vs. 4) Heb. 13:12-13 *“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”*
4. Illustration: A young lady once said to a Christian whose face was beaming with peace and joy, “I would give all the world to have joy and peace like you have.” And the quiet answer was, “Well, that is just what you will have to give to have it.” (E.C. Hadley)

III. The Support of her Quest (Vs. 3-4a)

A. The Duty of the Watchmen (Vs. 3)

1. They were keepers and guardians of the city, watching from the city walls and patrolling the streets to ensure its safety.
2. Illustrations: Nehemiah’s watchmen on the wall
3. It speaks of the role of spiritual leaders appointed by God for the watch care of His people.
 - a. Ezekiel was a watchman to Israel (Ez. 3:17; 33:7)
 - b. N.T. pastors are watchman of God’s flock (Heb. 13:17; 2 Tim. 4:5)
4. The watchman find the wandering maiden; they come to her as helpers of her quest. 2 Cor. 1:24 *“Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are **helpers** of your joy: for by faith ye stand.”*

B. The Direction of the Watchmen (Vs. 4a)

1. There are no recorded words but they obviously assist her as she

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finds her Beloved a short distance from them. Believers are helped through the ministry of personal council and public preaching of spiritual watchmen.

2. Christ is found in the company of His under shepherds (1:7-8)
3. “A pastor cannot re-establish a believer in a close walk with Christ but he can point out the direction.” (Masters)

IV. The Success of her Quest (Vs. 4b-5)

Finally, her search is rewarded. Her Beloved was found of her. This produces spiritual revival and renewal in her life.

A. The Renewal of her Devotion (Vs. 4b)

1. “I held him, and would not let him go” = she clings to her beloved. She has a renewed appreciation and understanding of just how much His presence means to her.
2. “until I had brought him into my mother’s house”
 - a. she is determined to bring His presence back into the centre of her home life.
 - b. She takes His presence back to her family home. Our spiritual renewal can have a blessed influence upon others in the Christian family (church)

B. The Renewal of her Submission (Vs. 5)

1. Words found in 2:7 repeated. They are the “refrain of satisfied love.” “To know and enjoy the love of Christ is the believer’s treasured heritage and it must be jealously nourished and guarded.” (Flanigan)
2. “The bride has peace again and it is not to be disturbed for a time. It seems when Christ restores our joy and fellowship with Himself He preserves us from any fresh disturbance until we have grown in maturity and strength before the next trial or test.” (Masters)
3. “till he please” = her focus is upon the will of her Beloved and upon pleasing him. How much of our devotional lives are Christ-centred? Do we consciously seek to submit to His will and leading?

Conclusion:

1. Are you in a night season, struggling with a sense of a loss of Christ’s presence (e.g. trial & test)? Perhaps God in His wisdom is allowing this in order that you might be stirred to pursue Him with renewed passion and vigour.
2. Is the presence of Christ retracted in our lives due to unconfessed sin?
3. Are we seeking Christ in the right place (e.g. the Word, prayer, godly guidance etc...)?