

Brought into His Secret Place

Song of Solomon 1:3-4; 2 Corinthians 2:16

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Greg L. Price

A Christian couple who are united in marriage and who sincerely love one another will not enjoy spending much time apart from one another. In fact, one of the evidences of a real love in a Christian marriage is the desire to be near the one loved. To be at a distance may be necessary at times due to work or visiting and caring for family members, but the heart aches to be reunited where there is a Christ-like love for the one loved. It's only where love has grown cold that a couple will enjoy a separation from one another.

Likewise, one of the evidences of your love for Jesus Christ is that you yearn to spend time with Him in reading His Word, communing with Him in prayer and meditation, worshipping Him, and enjoying Him. In other words, you want to be near Him, and when you sense a distance between you and Jesus, you ache to be near Him. The distance bothers you and concerns you. You cry out to Him to bring you into the chambers of His nearness to enjoy Him. This is what Jesus meant when He spoke of abiding in Him (John 15:4). Abiding in Christ is dwelling in Him and being near Him in close fellowship. Abiding in Christ does not end with being united to Him by faith, but is realized in your near and loving communion with Him. Abiding is not merely occupying the same house and living under the same roof; it is enjoying the sweetness and nearness of mutual love for one another. That is the desire of the bride from our text.

From our text, there are two questions: (1) Why Does the Bride Desire Christ's Love (Song 1:3)? (2) What Is the Response to the Bride's Desire for Christ's Love (Song 1:4)?

I. Why Does the Bride Desire Christ's Love (Song 1:3)?

A. Previously, we heard the desire of the bride of Christ for the kisses of His love (Song 1:2a), and when He comes near and bestows those kisses of love upon her, she tells Him that His love for her brings true satisfaction and contentment in life (Song 1:2b). Nothing in this world (signified by "wine") compares to the love of Jesus Christ. All that is in the world is constantly changing and is vanishing, but the love of Jesus Christ never changes and is eternal.

B. Now in verse 3, we hear the voice of the bride give to us the reason why she desires the kisses of Christ's love. She yearns for the kisses of His love not first and foremost because of how it makes her feel, but first and foremost because of who Jesus is and what He has done to show forth His love to her. How she feels will change depending upon her circumstances, but who Jesus is and what He has done will never change. That, dear ones, is the only reason that will keep you from riding on some kind of a daily emotional roller coaster (He loves me, He loves me not). When you ache for the kisses of His love because of His greatness and glory and His Covenant of Grace, you will grow to see that the Christian life is not about you and how you feel, but is about Jesus Christ (who He is, what He has accomplished for you, and what He has freely given to you—not because you were morally beautiful in His sight but morally ugly in His sight). Note what the bride of Jesus Christ declares in Song 1:3a.

1. What is "the savour of thy good ointments"?

a. Note first that the bride directly addresses the Lord Jesus: "thy good ointments". She now senses His nearness and closeness.

b. Ointments were sweet smelling oils and perfumes that were used in biblical times to enhance beauty and health (Psalm 104:15), to moisturize the skin in a dry climate, to deodorize the body (Psalm 45:8), to bestow upon one loved an expensive and treasured gift (as did Mary in John 12:3), to prepare the body of a loved one for burial (as did Nicodemus in John 19:39), and to set apart the priests (a

special fragrant oil, Exodus 30:31ff).

(1) The sweet smelling ointment that is upon the Lord Jesus fills the place wherever He is. His fragrance speaks of the glory of who Jesus is (His divine and human nature, His attributes and offices) and all that He has accomplished for His beloved bride, the church (His covenant love from all eternity and every spiritual and material blessing that He has purchased for and bestowed upon His bride). The “name” of Jesus is not simply “Jesus”, but represents everything by which He reveals Himself to us (Scripture, preaching, prayer, psalms, sacraments, etc.).

(2) His sweet ointment is a “savour of life unto life” to them that believe, but “a savour of death unto death” to them that will not believe (2 Corinthians 2:16). To the bride, there is nothing more precious or sweet than Jesus Christ and the riches of His love, mercy, and grace. To the adulteress and stranger, there is nothing cheaper and of little or no fragrance, for the beauty of His love and mercy mean nothing to them, and all they hear in a sermon that speaks of this fragrance is the judgment that will come upon them if they will not believe. Dear child of God, it is an evidence of God’s effectual work of grace in your life when Jesus is sweet and more precious to you than any earthly pleasure. And if that is not true for you, why is His love and grace not fragrant to you?

2. Note further that the sweetness of the ointment of the Lord Jesus is not confined within a certain space, but is diffused wherever He is and wherever He is preached and worshipped. His blessed fragrance is “poured forth” through His ordinances and sacraments (as in Psalm 133 the oil poured forth upon Aaron’s head). There are certain fragrances that are so attractive to us that we are drawn to them (whether it is a perfume, a flower, a scented candle, or a food). It is a delight and joy to breathe it and take it all in. You would love to stay there for a while. That is the way the ordinances of Jesus should be to all those who profess to trust Him and love Him. Does the reading and preaching of Christ’s Word come forth upon you as a most precious and sweet fragrance? Do you delight in it because it means that Jesus in all His glory and beauty is near and dear to you? Do you just go through the motions of singing the Psalms that Jesus has appointed or does the perfume of His presence in the Psalms woo you unto Him? Is prayer a sweet incense that is offered to the Lord? Has the sweet fragrance of the gospel of Jesus Christ passed from you to others (family, friends, co-workers) from the time you have spent in His presence (Ecclesiastes 7:1)? Your life will either give off a foul or a sweet odor—by their fruit (or their fragrance) you shall know them.

C. The fragrance of the Lord Jesus is precious and sweet to the bride AND TO THE VIRGINS (Song 1:3b). If the bride is the Church of Jesus Christ, then who are the virgins? The bride says to Christ, “Thy love is better than wine” (Song 1:2b). But the virgins likewise declare their love for Christ, “therefore do the virgins love thee” (Song 1:3b).

1. This is one of the problems with interpreting the Song of Solomon literally as actual history: the bride believes it is wonderful that the virgins love her husband (contrary to Genesis 2:24). Rather than being reproved for going after her husband, the virgins are looked upon in a favorable light for doing so (contrary to 1 Corinthians 7:2).

2. However, as an allegory we understand the bride to be the regenerate Church of Christ viewed as one body (collectively), whereas the virgins are regenerate members of Christ’s Church viewed individually (just as there is one body, but many individual members—there is one flock, but many individual sheep—there is one holy temple, but many individual living stones, etc.). In other words, not only does the regenerate Church as a body love the Lord Jesus and follow Him, but each regenerate member of it loves Him and follows Him in purity endeavoring to walk in loving obedience to His commands (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 14:4-5). Thus, there is nothing inappropriate about the bride collectively loving the Lord Jesus and the virgins individually loving the Lord Jesus—both are true figures of speech used in Scripture. The issue then for you today is this: You cannot hide yourself within the regenerate Church as a body (so as to lose yourself among the many), for you must answer for yourself individually whether you love the Lord Jesus, whether you

desire the Lord Jesus, whether His love is better to you than any other earthly pleasure, whether you will be faithful to Him or will you compromise your faithfulness by way of other lovers? A virgin (according to Scripture) is one who is faithful to the one loved. Are there other lovers in your life that you are following? How would you know? Who do you want to be like? Who do you long to be around? Is the fragrance of Jesus Christ (who He is and what He has done) sweet to you?

II. What Is the Response to the Bride's Desire for Christ's Love (Song 1:4)?

A. The first response is that of the bride (collectively) and the virgins (individually): "Draw ME, WE will run after thee."

1. Again, this presents a real moral problem if this is actual history (rather than an allegory), for the bride approvingly calls the virgins to join her in running in love after her husband.

2. Dear ones, there will be no running to the Lord Jesus if you do not even desire that He draw you to Himself (whether before conversion or after conversion—Philippians 2:13; John 15:5). Do you desire that the Lord in His boundless love cast His net around you and draw you to Himself that you might run after Him? The Christian life is not one of waiting until you feel like running after the Lord. No, it is one of spiritual activity, not laziness or idleness or resting in yesterday's victories. You must RUN the race that is set before you, EXERCISE yourself to godliness, CRUCIFY the flesh, and CUT OFF the hand that offends you. Drawing you in love is not so that you and I can sit around and do nothing, but it is to invigorate, encourage, and strengthen you in running with patience and perseverance this grand marathon race. What is preventing you from running after Jesus and His truth? What hinders you? Fear of man, lukewarmness, busyness, besetting sins, little or no interest, or discouragement? Recognize those as excuses not lawful reasons. Then cry out to the Lord, "Draw me in love and I will run after thee?" That is the cry and prayer of the bride of Jesus Christ. Is it yours?

B. A second response to the desire of the bride for the love of the king comes from the King Himself (the Lord Jesus): "the king hath brought me into his chambers."

1. When the bride aches to be near the Lord Jesus ("Draw me, we will run after thee"), what does He do? Does He cast her away from Himself? Does He condemn her for being presumptuous or too honest with her desires? Does He rebuke her for allowing such desires to carry her away? No, He brings her into his chambers (a place of nearness, closeness, and communion where she enjoys and delights in Him through the Word, prayer, and meditation—Psalm 27:4-5; Psalm 91:1-2).

2. In fact, it would be wrong for the bride and virgins to have no desire to be alone with and enjoy that secret communion with the Lord. Something is clearly wrong when that is the case. To the contrary, this is the very answer and response to her desire for the King's love—He also desires to show her His love in spending time with her in communing with her. Dear ones, that is the chief end of the Lord's Day—communion with Jesus Christ. He is not robbing you of anything. He desires to spend that whole day with you without all of the worldly distractions. Will you tell the Lord Jesus who redeemed you, "Sorry, I am too busy"? Nothing says I love you more than the desire to spend time with the one loved. To be near and close to the one loved. It is not giving the one loved things—it is giving the one loved yourself—as Jesus has done and still does.

C. A third response is that of the bride and the virgins: "we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine."

1. Again, the bride and the virgins unite their voice together in their love for Jesus. Dear ones, the Christian life is not one of gloom and doom, or one of condemnation and vindictive wrath. That has passed away through your union with Jesus Christ (Romans 5:9; Romans 8:1). Even mourning and repentance for sin is not an end in itself, but a means of comfort and joy in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ (Psalm 51:12-

13).

2. The bride and the virgins desire to remember the love of Jesus more than they remember wine (or any earthly pleasure). It is a common reason why there is discouragement and hopelessness in your life and mine—we forget the love, the mercy, the faithfulness, and the patience of the Lord. We remember so much in the course of a day about work, studies, the names of people, current events, schedules, and plans for a future trip, but we do not remember that the love of Jesus Christ is better than wine (anything in this world or the best this world has to offer). That forgetfulness comes often at a great price in our fall into hopelessness and despair. When you remember the love of Jesus to the saints of old and to you in your life, and when you remember His promises to be with you and faithful to you, you are far less likely to fall into the trap of discouragement that the enemy has set for you. For when your attention is fixed upon the faithfulness of Jesus Christ throughout history and in your life, hope will chase away the darkness of despair.

3. The “upright” are the same as the “virgins”. As virgins, Christians are called to follow the Lord and none other (First Table); and as upright, Christians are called to stand straight in righteousness before mankind (Second Table).

Christian husbands, it is your love and tenderness for your wife that draws her to you—not your abrasiveness, sarcasm, and selfishness. Christian wives, you should desire to be drawn by the love of your husband that you might run after him—not compete with him and not undermine his authority. That is how a Christian marriage is looking more and more like Christ and His bride—the Church.

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