

Jesus Wants to See Your Face

Song of Solomon 2:14-15; Numbers 6:24-26

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You are familiar with the benediction pronounced by Aaron upon God's people in Numbers 6:24-26 (especially: "The LORD make his face shine upon thee" "The LORD lift up his countenance [face] upon thee.")

When Jesus makes His face shine upon you and lifts up His face upon you (as He does daily), it means He looks upon you with everlasting love, with delight, and with joy over you as His chosen bride. He does not regret having chosen you and called you to Himself when you struggle or fall. His face (as it were) beams love and grace upon you. You are to look by faith (not by sight) upon His caring, forgiving, peaceful face toward you, His elect bride, for whom He bore God's condemning once and for all.

Dear redeemed Christian, how do you see the countenance of Jesus toward you today? The enemy of your soul wants you to believe that the face of Jesus is looking away with abandonment, or is looking with shame, or is frowning because He cannot believe you have fallen into sin again. Clearly, Jesus is never pleased with your sin (great or small), but He still comes to you, His beloved bride (weak and frail as you may be), and commands you to lift up your downcast face in order to behold His face that shines in all of its love and mercy upon you. The main points are: (1) Lift Up Your Face (Song 2:14); (2) Beware of the Little Foxes (Song 2:15).

I. Lift Up Your Face (Song 2:14).

A. In the previous verses, the Lord Jesus had come to His beloved bride (His elect church), and in love He called her to rise up from her sorrow and discouragement which came to her from the trials, afflictions, failures, and persecution she had suffered. It seemed to the bride as though Jesus had left her to face all these troubles alone (not true—it was her mere perception). It was like a dark season of winter to her that left her spiritually cold. But now Jesus has come to her and by faith she hears His voice (as He speaks to her through His Word). Listen once again to the tender words of the Lord in Song 2:10-13. This is what Jesus is calling out to you to hear every day in His promises found in Scripture. Faith lays hold of that call from Christ and comes away with Him into that springtime of life, love, communion, and loving obedience. He is calling. Are you listening and heeding that call?

B. The Lord Jesus continues His words of comfort to His discouraged and downcast bride here in Song 2:14. If there is any hesitation in the beloved bride of Christ to come away with Him and to enjoy blessed communion with Him, Jesus dispels any reluctance on her part by the following precious words to her. Jesus melts your fears, your coldness, your hardness, and any hesitation on your part by His amazing love that comes not only in the spring of your life, but also in the winters of your life. What are the words of Jesus that melts her cold heart?

1. "O my dove."

a. Here is a most affectionate name that Jesus bestows upon His chosen bride. From ancient times the affection name of "dove" was used as one of the most tender and affectionate names for the beloved one. A dove was a symbol of humility, tenderness, and peace.

b. Remember the beloved bride has been going through a winter time in her life—not a spring time—a low point in her spiritual walk, not a high point—a time of struggling, not a time of victory—a night of weeping, not a morning of rejoicing. And yet the Lord Jesus does not call her a vulture or a snake because she has stumbled or fallen or because she is discouraged or downcast, but says to her, "O my dove."

c. We may deserve to be called a vulture or a snake due to our sin and unfaithfulness, but Jesus does not come with a scornful and condemning frown. He comes with a face of love that melts the coldness and breaks the hardness of the heart which brings forth faith, confession, repentance, and loving obedience. His face of love draws you to Him rather than sending you away from Him. Even when He disciplines you, it is always with a face of love and mercy, not vengeful wrath.

d. What is the face that our children see, not only when they are obedient, but even when they are disciplined for their disobedience? They should not see a face of uncontrolled, bitter anger that is calling them names (nor should that be true of husbands and wives). The face of love is not tolerant of evil. The face of love has moral boundaries and loves God's Moral Law. But the face of love is lifted up upon the one loved with a hopeful look to his/her transformation—not to his/her condemnation. This is the face of Jesus as He comes to His bride.

2. **“That art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs.”**

a. Here the metaphor for the hardships the beloved bride has been facing has changed from the winter cold (Song 2:11) to the clefts of the rock and the secret places of the stairs (or ridges in the rock). The bride of Christ is now likened to a helpless dove that is hiding in the secret places and crevices of a lonely mountain (Jeremiah 48:28, like Elijah who poured out his heart in mourning to the Lord from the clefts of the rock due to his enemies). Some have also understood “the clefts of the rock” to be a reference to the Christian finding his hope in Jesus, and hiding himself in Christ when he sorrows over his failures, losses, trials, and afflictions. The voice of the dove in Scripture was at times associated with mourning and sorrow—it is not like the joyous singing of the lark, but is rather one of mournful cooing (Isaiah 38:14).

b. The beloved bride of Christ, upon hearing the loving call of Jesus to come away with Him from her time of spiritual winter and coldness and to enjoy the spring of His communion and life (Song 2:10-13), was brought to mourning and shame over her sin and over the loving and gracious call of Jesus to come away with Him. Her heart was broken over her sin and His endless love and mercy. She was repenting in grief and sorrow over how she had treated Him. His great love and mercy had broken her heart and she saw so clearly her sin through her transgression of His holy law and she mourned like a dove over it. She was so ashamed that she wanted to hide herself from Jesus.

c. Dear ones, without shame and mourning over sin, there will be no true comfort, joy, and reformation (Ezra 9:5-6). Shame in our society over public acts of gross indecency hardly draws a blushed face any longer. People don't care, because rebellion against parents, sexual immorality, blasphemy, Sabbath-breaking, unlawful divorce, and abortion are so commonplace on TV, in movies, in novels, in magazines, and on the news, that they are accepted in society at large.

d. So many churches today want to avoid shame and mourning over sin against God. That is just too negative. In this “enlightened” age preaching must be positive and entertaining; otherwise people will not return to pay for the weekly pep-talk. Likewise prayers must not address our pride, our lust of the flesh, our unbelief, our covetousness, our lack of love in our homes, or defection from biblical doctrine and worship, but rather simply pray for God's blessing. But dear ones, the sacrifices of God that He will receive are a broken and contrite heart and a sense of shame over how we have dishonored the Lord, His gracious gospel, and His holy law (Psalm 51:16-17). Without a biblical shame over our sin committed against the Lord and our neighbor, we will not enjoy the forgiveness of the Lord, the peace of the Lord, the comfort of the Lord, or the joy of the Lord (“Blessed are those who mourn: for they shall be comforted” Matthew 5:4). The face of the bride is looking down in shame and is mournful like a dove as the voice of the Lord (through His precious promises) breaks through to her.

3. **“Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.”**

a. It is one thing for Jesus to lift up His loving face upon you, but it is an amazing blessing of His love for Him to come to you in your sorrow, weeping, and mourning over your own

unfaithfulness, and for Him to **command** you to lift up your face, to wipe away your tears, so that you can behold His face that is beaming with affection and care for you. He wants to see your face, your tears, and your sorrow so that you can see His face of forgiveness, mercy, and peace. Jesus will use strong measures in His love to break our stubborn will, but He will only do so out of love to transform us not to condemn us (Romans 8:1). Your face is comely (beautiful) to Jesus because in it He sees His righteousness, His forgiveness, and His work of sanctification. He sees beauty in your face when He sees your tears and sorrow over your sin, over great suffering, persecution, or loss of health or loved one. Your face is beautiful to Him.

b. We not only delight in His voice in His Word (that's a given), but do you hear what Jesus **commands** here: Let me hear your voice. Jesus delights in your voice—it is sweet and pleasant to Him. He takes the greatest pleasure in your prayers, in your worship, in your singing His psalms, in your thanksgiving, in your confession of sin, and in your crying out to Him in your need. Your voice does not grate on His nerves like fingernails on a chalk board. He doesn't find your voice in coming to Him a hundred times a day to be a nuisance. Your voice is sweet music to His ears. That is what love does. To the ear of someone else who does not love you, your voice may be annoying and irritating, but to the ear of someone who loves you, your voice is transformed into something sweet and beautiful. That is what the love of Jesus does—it makes you the most beautiful of all creation in His sight, and it makes your voice the most pleasant of sounds in His ear. May the love of Jesus Christ do the same in our families and in our church. You may feel as though no one wants to hear your voice at certain times of need—but Jesus does and even commands you to let Him hear your voice.

II. Take Away the Little Foxes (Song 2:15).

A. The Lord Jesus not only came to His beloved bride (His elect church) to encourage her to lift up her face to behold upon His face of hope and love, but now He takes care to warn her against enemies that are harmful and destructive to her peace, purity, and unity: foxes. The scene shifts from doves in clefts of the rock to a vineyard that is damaged by foxes. Though the scene and characters shift, there is continuity in the message that Jesus gives to His bride. Those whom He loves so much as to come to them in their sorrow and lift up their face filled with tears to behold His face of forgiveness, hope, and mercy, He also loves so much as to warn them about these foxes that spoil the Church of Christ and spoil individual Christians.

1. Vineyards and grape vines are used figuratively in Scripture to represent the Church of Christ (whether in the Old Testament, Isaiah 5:7; or in the New Testament, Matthew 21:33ff). Jesus calls Himself the true vine and those who profess faith in Him as branches in the vine (John 15).

2. One of the enemies of vineyards and the grape vine was the fox that would dig out the soil from around the vine for shelter, thus exposing the roots and spoiling the young and tender grapes growing on the vine.

3. Here the Lord Jesus warns those who care for the vineyard (the ministers and elders of His Church whom He has called to protect His vineyard) to take away the foxes and even the little foxes that harm and endanger the church (and especially young believers) by way of error in compromising the truth or leading believers away from the truth of Scripture into corrupt doctrine and worship (contrary to the scriptural truth that is summarized in faithful Confessions of Faith, Catechism, Covenants, and Directories). The warnings in Scripture are many (Ezekiel 13:3-4; Matthew 7:14; 1 John 4:1). Foxes are nocturnal and do their damage at night when they are not seen. They are sneaky, crafty, and sly. So are false teachers that would divide Christ's Church by seeking to introduce that which is contrary to the truth of God's Word in subtlety like the serpent who came to Eve in the Garden of Eden ("Hath God said").

4. Dear ones, there is a difference on the one hand between earnest, sincere Christians who have questions, concerns, and even doubts and seek to resolve them by going to the eldership to have them resolved, and on the other hand false teachers (foxes) who have disagreements with the truth and go to

others in the church in order to gain a following and bring division into the church. The first group seeks to preserve the peace, purity, and unity of Christ's Church. The second group seeks to destroy the peace, purity, and unity of Christ's Church. Your household is likewise your little church—husbands and fathers.

B. There is one more application.

1. We might apply this verse to personal sins and weaknesses that tempt us to compromise, to follow the crowd, to seek the approval of man, to feed the lusts of the flesh, to find time for all manner of business and pleasure—but to find little or no time for the Lord Jesus, to make excuses for sin, and to blame others for your sin. It's the little lies that lead to the big lies. It's a little exposure to nakedness on websites that leads to addiction to pornography. It's a little toleration of sin that leads to promoting that sin. Guard your heart from even the little foxes that will harm and hinder the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

2. Take all sin seriously, especially the little foxes; for they are the ones that we are more likely to excuse. Mourn over them, confess them, seek the Lord's forgiveness, and apply the death and resurrection of Christ over them just as you would with the full grown foxes. And lift up your face in your godly sorrow to behold Jesus with His face of love and mercy in forgiving you and in overcoming those foxes (Psalm 42:5).

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