

SONG OF SOLOMON: THE JOURNEY BEGINS WITH A CRISIS

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Songs. 1:6-7

“Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother’s sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept! 7 Tell me, you [Jesus] whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?”

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The Bride's spiritual journey begins with a spiritual crisis that is common to every sincere but weak believer. When the young woman discovers her own darkness, she also recognizes that she is precious to God.
- B. We are beautiful to God even in our weakness for 4 reasons.
 1. **When we believe in Christ we receive the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17-21).**
 2. **When we are born again, the Holy Spirit puts a yes to God in our spirit.** Every movement of our heart is the work of God's grace in us (**Ps. 51:12; Mt. 26:41**).
 3. **Our beauty is related to God's character.** Each of the affections and passions in God's heart determine how He feels for us. The beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. God sees things very differently from how man sees them (**1 Sa. 16: 7; Isa. 55: 7-9**).
 4. **God sees us through the lens of our eternal destiny as the Bride of Christ (Rev. 5:10).**
- C. **We must understand the three stages of our victory in Jesus:**
 1. Our victory begins with our sincere intention to obey God.
 2. We have a partial victory but a continuous struggle. We are victorious but we still struggle with our flesh in certain areas of our life (**Ga. 5:16-17**).
 3. It is a progress in which our desires have already been transformed (**Rom. 6:22**).

II. HER REJECTION AND SHAME

Songs. 1:6 *“My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard [heart] I have not kept!”*

- A. In this portion, the Bride describes her brothers as ***“her mother's children.”*** Through Song of Songs (**1:6; 3:4, 11; 8:2,5**) the mother refers to the Church since we were born of God through the Church through the Holy Spirit. God is our Father and the Church is presented as our mother.
- B. **The brothers were angry because of the youthful zeal of the Bride.** They

symbolize those who are spiritually dull and do not appreciate young and fervent believers because they are "too" devoted and convict them. There are those who despise spiritual zeal, calling it an exaggeration.

- C. The zeal of believers who have a passion for God often angers spiritually stagnant leaders (**Mark 14:4**) although **our zeal must also be seasoned with wisdom and humility**. It is common for those with a new fervor for Jesus to take pride and speak insensibly when they call on others to give themselves to Jesus unconditionally.
- D. **The maiden was mistreated by her brothers who made her work hard, taking advantage of her fervor by giving her many responsibilities**. The maiden wears out spiritually, but not so much from hard work but from the religious yoke, which speaks of working without connecting with the Holy Spirit. Embracing too many responsibilities out of fear of man and out of the desire to be noticed leads us to wear ourselves out spiritually.
- E. **The maiden ends up guarding other vines, but not hers**. Our first responsibility before God is our personal walk with Jesus. Originally, what she longed for most were the kisses of His word. However, as time passed, the garden of her heart was choked by the tares of spiritual coldness. **Keeping your own vineyard means taking care of your personal communion with God by doing Her will**.

III. HIS DESPERATE CRY FOR MORE OF JESUS

Songs. 1:7 "Tell me [Jesus], you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?"

- A. **She feels the pain of serving Jesus from a distance**. She feels like a veiled woman who served the Pastor from a distance. In the ancient world, when women worked, they covered their heads especially in front of strangers.
- B. She expresses: Why do I have to serve along the way and not near you like I used to? She longs to be wherever her loved one is; longs for experiences of deep closeness with the Lord and in the midst of her crisis she cries out with a desperate prayer and asks the great Shepherd, **"Tell me, where do you graze [feed] your flocks?" We can only offer this kind of cry if we have confidence that we are beautiful to God, even in our weakness**.
- C. **She is a genuine lover of God even though she still has darkness in her soul**. She is not a hypocrite as the enemy wants her to think. She did not say to her beloved: "Tell me that I am not a hopeless hypocrite." She rather cries out, *"I know that I am one who loves you, tell me how to find you."* **This is similar to Peter's experience; After his failure**, he still loved the Lord and when Jesus asks him, he responds: *"Lord, you know that I love you even though I have just betrayed you"* (**Jn. 21:15**).
- D. **"At noon" God wants us to rest amid the pressures of this life by connecting with Him, not just working for Him (Ps 23: 2)**.

- E. She longs to be satisfied again by Jesus; amid the pressures that has been allowed. Intense ministerial activity and even growth in influence are not enough. She says, *"I have been fed by others, but now I long for You to feed me. Where will you satisfy the cry of my spirit?"*
- F. **Jesus longs for us to pray this prayer. He doesn't want us to give up, indulging in a life of spiritual boredom in God.** The Lord is pleased when we cry out: *"Feed my heart like you used to, I am serving from a distance, my own vineyard has tares, many things are going wrong, I am failing and people are angry with me. I need to touch you, who I love".* **No matter what it costs, she wants the fire of intimacy with God to consume her once more.** She is crying out to regain her "first love" (**Rev. 2: 4**).

IV. THE GLORIOUS RESPONSE OF JESUS

Songs. 1:8 *"If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats beside the shepherds' tents."*

- A. Jesus listens to his desperate prayer and answers her by giving her **7 declarations that answer him where he can find him.** First, He affirms that she is beautiful in His eyes, then He gives a 3-facet response (**1:8b, c, d**) and finally a 3-facet affirmation (**1:9-11**). The maiden responds with great gratitude (**Song 1:12**). A vital part of the theology of the holy passion is found in Jesus' response. **This is the Lord's first revelation to the Bride on his journey.** He introduces himself as the "Great Counselor," giving her practical advice on how to move on.
- B. Jesus says, *"I know you serve me from a distance, but I see the cry in your heart to love me"* and begins by saying, **"If you don't know."** His answer surprises many. We would expect a reprimand. **He knows that our garden is not being guarded and that we serve Him from a distance, yet we are beautiful to Him.** He calls us beautiful even in the midst of our disorientation and failures. We may be despised by abusive brothers, however we are precious to Him. We may despise ourselves but for Him we are *"the most beautiful of women."* **He speaks directly to her shame and her rejection.**
- C. **Jesus' 3-faceted response to where He pastures his flocks and where He establishes us in intimacy with God, emphasizes the importance of life in the Church.** The three answers relate to life in the Body and answer the three strongest temptations that are common to all of us:
 1. **First, there is committing ourselves to life in the Body of Christ, rejecting isolation (Song 1:8c). He tells her to follow in the footsteps of the flock, or to get involved in the Corps community.** The ***"footsteps of the flock"*** is the place where all people walk with God. The Lord says: *"continue to the place where the Body walks."* He says: *"go back to the community, do not overreact against the brothers who judge or mistreat you."* **Isolating ourselves from the church is generally not motivated by a longing to seek God but by rejection, bitterness, and shame. The devil wants us isolated to destroy us.**
Heb. 10:25 **"not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some..."**

2. **Second, keep your God-given responsibilities, rejecting idleness. (Song 1:8d). We must feed the flock that God places before us. Jesus will give her more of Him when she takes on the responsibility of feeding the young ones or herds of goats that God sends us without neglecting our fellowship with God.**
 3. **Third, submit to spiritual authority by rejecting independence (Song 1:8e).** The Bride serves the Body of Christ (the church) near the tents of true shepherds. **Jesus wants us to have an open spirit to the shepherds (leaders) that God puts over us.** At this time the rebellious and independent spirit abounds (**Mt. 24:12**). God knows that every leader He has or will put over us is imperfect. We encounter Jesus in profound ways by relating to imperfect leaders. **He uses imperfect shepherds to test us and to reveal the things that are unresolved in our hearts.** When we see the faults of the imperfect leaders that God has placed over us we are tempted to object to dwelling near their tents with an untenable spirit. Submission is about being humble and keeping our spirit open to authority.
- D. **Summary: Jesus' response touches on the 3 central temptations in the Body of Christ.** There is the temptation to isolation and bitterness when we feel rejected or mistreated by angry brothers and when we feel the shame related to our sin. **We must stay in community, as God's path to healing. Then there is the temptation to selfishness.** Jesus longs for us to take care of the little ones. We find it best in the context of serving others. **Last is the temptation to resist spiritual authority.**

V. REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. **Do you feel like you've been hurt by other members of the Body of Christ including leaders? How has your walk with God affected you and how should you resolve it?**
2. **What does Jesus say to those who feel spiritually exhausted?**
3. **Have you been tempted to isolate yourself, be spiritually idle, or not submit to authority? Share your experience and your determination to overcome.**