

Love Sickness for Jesus Perseveres through All Failures

Song of Solomon 5:7-8; 2 Corinthians 10:8

January 12, 2020

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Sickness is one of the miseries of this life that originates from the fall of man into sin. Thank God that for the Christian the curse has been removed from whatever sickness God brings into our lives so that even sickness and death are used as a means of glorifying God and sanctifying us. Nevertheless, because sickness is a misery of this life, we seek to prevent it through various means (rest, exercise, good nutrition, and supplements) and we seek to recover from it when it overcomes us. We don't enjoy being sick. We don't want to remain sick.

Yet there is a sickness that is good for us; that actually makes us stronger; a sickness from which the true Christian never wants to recover.

What is the sickness? It is love sickness for Jesus. The bride proclaims, "I am sick of love" (Song 5:8). She is not saying that she is tired and weary of loving Jesus and wants to give up loving Him, but rather that her love for Jesus has captured her like an illness, penetrated to her innermost being like a sickness, so that it controls her and only finds its cure in Jesus Himself (in His love, mercy, righteousness, peace, salvation, truth, and communion). Let this sickness for the Lord Jesus grip your heart and your entire life. Pray for this sickness to be yours. Seek for it. Ask for it. Knock on heaven's door that you might catch this blessed sickness. This is the sickness for which every true Christian seeks and prays.

The main points are from our text are: (1) The Failure of Leaders (Song 5:7); (2) The Communion of Believers (Song 5:8); (3) Love Sickness for Jesus Perseveres through All Failures (Song 5:8).

I. The Failure of Leaders (Song 5:7).

A. The bride of Christ has now been awakened from her spiritual laziness and sleep by the tender voice of Jesus as He pleads with her to open the door to Him and as He knocks that she would not leave Him out of her life, but rather with a wholehearted love enjoy Him in all of His beauty (Song 5:2-4). By His sovereign power of love and grace, Jesus reaches His hand through the door to lift the latch, and as He does so, her cold heart is melted over her treatment of Him who loved her with an everlasting and unchanging love in spite of all her sins and failures. With renewed affection and repentance, she goes to the door, but He is not there. She seeks for Him in her private acts of worship, but she does not find Him in that blessed nearness. He has withdrawn that sense of His sweet presence from her for the time in order to build within her a greater love and desire to be close to Him (Song 5:5-6). This brings us to Song 5:7 where the bride leaves her house and her private acts of worship and goes forth into the city (the Visible Church) to find her Lord and Savior in the public acts and ordinances of worship.

B. As the elect bride searches for Jesus with a renewed love and repentance for her laziness and failures, she attends upon the blessed ordinances of the church (prayer, singing of Psalms, reading and preaching of the Word, the Lord's Supper). To our surprise she does not find help and comfort in seeking her blessed Savior, but to the contrary she is found by the watchmen of the city who treat her harshly, who wound her, and who take her veil from her. What is happening here?

1. The watchmen and keepers of the walls in ancient cities were those had authority to keep peace and to protect the inhabitants within the city. They were to warn of approaching enemies from the walls. They also walked the streets to ensure the safety of the people.

2. The city is the Visible Church of Jesus Christ (Song 3:3), and the watchmen are ministers and elders who are called by King Jesus to protect the city from enemies (Hebrews 13:17). Dear ones, our

souls need to be watched over not only by Jesus (our Overseer, 1 Peter 2:25), but by His faithful watchmen whom He has appointed (through their oversight, teaching, preaching, and leading). Lawful authority is not for the destruction of those who are led. It is not to bully those who are led. It is not to please oneself. Lawful, God-appointed authority (in the church and in the home) is for edification (2 Corinthians 10:8). Those who are led should know that they are loved more than the leader desires to please himself. To be a minister, teacher, or leader in the church or home brings greater accountability (James 3:1).

a. The most dangerous enemies are not those who reveal themselves as enemies from outside the Church (in false religions and tyrannical governments that suppress the truth), but are those who pose as watchmen, but are false teachers. It is much easier to identify the enemy when he makes no pretense about his hatred for the Bible, the gospel, or the commandments of the Lord. But it is quite another thing when he appears to be wearing the same uniform as faithful watchmen.

b. Jesus tells us that you will know false teachers by their fruit (Matthew 7:16): the fruit of their doctrine (the voice of Jesus) and the fruit of their lives (the love of Jesus). Listen to the warning of the Lord through a prophet and an apostle (Isaiah 56:10; Acts 20:28-31).

c. That is why you must love the truth of Jesus Christ in Scripture—if you love Jesus, you must love His truth in His Word (not only the gospel, but His commandments; not only doctrine, but worship; not only that which is easy to accept, but that which is hard and difficult because it brings the wrath of men against you). It is only in His light that you will see light (Psalm 36:9). This is why we rejoice in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and in our Covenants. They are faithful summaries of what the Bible teaches. You will only be able to distinguish the voice of true shepherds from false shepherds by their agreement with the voice of the One True Shepherd speaking in His Word. The closest communion with Jesus is in walking in His truth and godliness, not in error and disobedience. It is easier to profess what is true than to live it.

3. Here we see that rather than protecting the bride who is looking with a repentant heart full of God's mercy and love for the King of the city, she is hindered, reproached, and condemned. The watchmen wound her conscience and abuse her by imposing on her that which is not found in Scripture (like the Pharisees who placed heavy burdens on the people by the mere authority of men in doctrine and worship and church government—Matthew 23:4). They take away her veil which was at that time and place a customary sign of submission to lawful authority. This reveals that the bride is not rebellious here (if she were she would need correction and church discipline). However, she is not stirring up trouble in the church. She is no longer wallowing in spiritual slumber. She had failed the Lord Jesus, but now she is awake and seeking for Jesus and His truth, and yet she is discouraged and mistreated by those who ought to be comforting her and encouraging her in her search for that nearness in communion with the Lord Jesus.

4. Dear ones, sometimes those who are appointed by the Lord to lead, protect, instruct, and love those who are sincere, weak, and humbled believers become those who hinder, discourage, and wound with their words and actions (leaders in the church and in the home). We need to constantly evaluate the kind of watchmen we are (in the church and home). Are we a watchman like Jesus or like these watchmen who cared more about their authority than they loved and care for the weak yet love-sick bride of Jesus Christ? God grant us repentance and renewed love for Jesus and His lambs He has entrusted to us.

II. The Communion of Believers (Song 5:8).

A. The bride leaves the watchmen who have so miserably failed to protect her. Where does she go? She goes to her individual believing prayer partners (the daughters of Jerusalem), and there she appeals to them to help her find that nearness of communion with Jesus in His truth and holiness.

1. Thank the Lord that even when we as ministers and elders fail to care for the flock as we should and to be watchmen who protect the city of God as we should that the beloved bride of Christ

collectively can and does find comfort and encouragement from individual brothers and sisters in Christ within the city of God.

2. The bride does not allow even the discouragement that she has found from the watchmen to lead her from seeking the Lord Jesus. How many have placed such an idolatrous confidence in ministers that when the minister falls into some grievous immorality or takes up some false doctrine or miserably fails the flock in some way, the faith of professing Christians is so severely wounded that they cease their search for that blessed communion with Jesus in His truth and ordinances. They become deserters. They fail to read His Word and pray as they once did. Rather than the failure of watchmen reminding them that their faith cannot be in man and their love must always be supremely placed in Jesus, they allow such failures in watchmen to drive them away from Jesus. That, my dear friends, is simply idolatry. Even faithful watchmen are mere fallible men, saved by God's grace, who daily need the mercy of Jesus Christ. I need God's mercy and grace as much as you. I need your prayers as much as you need mine. It is only as we see our desperate need of Jesus and His mercy that we, watchmen, will be able to show the mercy of Christ in our preaching, teaching, counseling, and lives.

B. The bride charges (or binds by promise) the daughters of Jerusalem that if they find that nearness of communion with Jesus that they also call out in prayer for her, for she is love-sick for Him.

1. Jesus wanted His disciples to pray with and for Him in the Garden of Gethsemane as He faced the cross. Paul wanted the churches to pray with and for him in His ministry (2 Thessalonians 3:1). I need your prayers for me throughout the week. We need to be those who bear the burdens of one another in prayer.

2. How often does someone ask us to pray for him/her, and we say that we will, but then forget because we did not write it down. Rather than keeping promises to pray, we so often are breaking promises to pray for one another. We need one another (adults need the children, and children the adults (the greatest needs the least)).

III. Love Sickness for Jesus Perseveres through All Failures (Song 5:8).

A. What is it supremely that the bride wants the daughters of Jerusalem to pray for? "Tell him, that I am sick of love." Pray for me that Jesus would hear in my prayers and see in my life that I am love-sick for Him; that I will hunger and thirst to be constant and not wavering in my love for Him or His truth; that I will not allow my own failures in spiritual laziness or backsliding to cool my love for Jesus; that I will not allow the failures of others in the way they treat me to lead me away from the Lord Jesus as my first love; that I will always believe that nothing can separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus; and that when I do not sense His presence with me, I will not follow my emotions and fall back into lukewarmness, but that I will walk by faith and not by sight or feelings.

B. Dear ones, your love-sickness for Jesus that you now know in part here upon the earth will be fully realized to a satisfaction that you cannot even imagine when you see Him face-to-face. Whereas you struggle now in showing by your prayers and in your life that you are love-sick for Jesus, in heaven there will be no struggle at all. What you were saved and redeemed to do (to be love-sick for Jesus), you will do forever, without any struggle or interruption at all. For you will fully understand the love of Jesus for you, and you will be set free to reflect that love to Him as you have never been able to do on this earth. That will be the glory of heaven.

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