

Jesus Delights to be Near You

Song of Solomon 7:6-9; Proverbs 15:1-2

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The word “wine” (*yayin* in Hebrew) is used six times in the Song of Solomon, and never in this Love Song is it used with a negative connotation. Wine in this Love Song is always used of that which is good, precious, refreshing, and rejuvenating (Song 1:2 (bride), Song 1:4 (bride); Song 4:10 (Jesus); Song 5:1 (Jesus); Song 7:9 (Jesus); Song 8:2 (bride). Why do I draw this to your attention? I do so for a couple reasons.

First, it is not the use of wine that is condemned in Scripture, but rather the abuse of wine (and other alcoholic beverages): Ephesians 5:18. The same wine (*yayin*) that intoxicated Noah (Genesis 9:21) was a blessing enjoyed by God’s people as a gift from God (Psalm 104:14-15). Likewise, the same wine (*oinos*) that can make one drunk (Ephesians 5:18) was made by Christ for a wedding (John 2:9-10). There is a Hebrew word for the non-fermented juice of the grape, and it is used only once in the Old Testament: Numbers 6:3 (*mishrah*, a word which refers to steeping the fruit in water). Didn’t God’s people dilute the wine to such an extent that it virtually was incapable of drunkenness? In Isaiah 1:21, God condemns Jerusalem because she had corrupted that which is pure, and then likens her corruption to the dross that corrupts good silver and to water that corrupts good wine (Isaiah 1:22). No one is required to drink wine socially or privately (especially those who have a problem abusing it), but likewise, no one is forbidden from drinking wine responsibly as a refreshing gift from God (1 Corinthians 10:31). It is, however, an element to be used in the Lord’s Supper (from Passover to 1 Corinthians 11).

The second reason I draw your attention to the use of wine in this Love Song is because it is used in our text today to refer to a grace that comes from Christ to the benefit of family, fellow Christians, and the world. This is a grace from Christ given to His beloved bride (Song 7:9) that is like wine (*yayin*) that goes down sweetly and makes those who are spiritually asleep to awaken and to speak. Rather than putting one to sleep and making one drunk, this spiritual wine makes alive, awakens, and gives those who receive it a grace to speak the truth to the praise of Jesus.

The main points from our text are: (1) Christ Delights to Be Near You (Song 7:6-9a); (2) The Effects of Christ’s Nearness (Song 7:9b).

I. Christ Delights to Be Near You (Song 7:6-9a).

A. In Song 7:1-5, the Lord Jesus was again overcome by the beauty of His elect bride as He describes her from the soles of her feet to the crown of her head. Jesus who knows what true beauty is (for He is the One who created and bestowed beauty upon all of His creation), He is the One who cannot take His eyes off of you, His beloved bride. He is held captive in the galleries beholding the supreme beauty of His grace that He has freely imparted unto you (Song 7:5).

B. As the Lord Jesus gazes, stares, and marvels at the splendor of His grace in you, He summarizes again what He sees when He looks upon you.

1. You are “**fair**” (beautiful) to Jesus. The Hebrew word translated “fair” is used 13 times in its various forms in this Love Song to refer to the beauty of the bride. Even with our sins, weaknesses, and failures (which are not beautiful), He is still overwhelmed with His grace, righteousness, faith, love, joy, peace, and submission to Him that outshine our sins (Song 4:7). Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound (Romans 5:20).

2. You are “**pleasant**” to Jesus. You who trust Him, love Him, and obey Him bring Him such

pleasure. How could you and I bring Him pleasure with all of the struggles and battles we have with temptation and sin? Even the fact that you are striving against that temptation is pleasant to Him; even the shame that you know when you fall; even the perseverance to not give up and to get up again and again brings Him pleasure. This is the beauty of holiness that is seen even in your battles. We may only see that we fell again, but He sees that we hate our sin, are ashamed and sorrow over it, seek forgiveness, and renew our love and obedience to submit to Him and His commandments.

3. You are full of “**delights**” to Jesus. Jesus is not calling you nasty names when you fall. He is not even in some kind of neutral, apathetic state toward you (like “I can take you or leave you”). You are not simply a delight (singular) to Him; you are full of delights (plural) to Him. He is not ready to kick you down the street like you would kick a can that you find along the side of the street. He finds you on the side of the road, and rather than kicking you, takes you up in His almighty arms because He delights in you. That, dear ones, is what the gospel is all about—our unworthiness in ourselves and His delight in us in Jesus Christ because we are His **love**, chosen in Christ before the world began (Ephesians 1:4). That must never grow old even if we hear it a million times. Only as you grow in understanding and resting by faith in that love of Christ will you grow and bear the fruit of holiness from a joyful heart.

C. And because this is how Jesus sees you by His work of grace and love, He next expresses how much He earnestly desires to be near you (even when you don’t sense Him). He can’t take His eyes off of you, and He can’t stay away from you who are united to Him by faith in that marital Covenant of Grace. He wants to be near you.

1. Christ’s loving expression of His nearness is found in likening you, His beloved bride, to a flourishing palm tree whose breasts are as a cluster of grapes (Song 7:7). The palm tree is a symbol of that which is alive and green even in the dryness of the desert all around it (Psalm 92:12-15; 1 Kings 6:29). So the life of Christ in you does not waver because of the dry conditions around you, even in the scorching heat of persecution, the hatred of enemies for your stand for His truth (like a tall, straight palm tree), the betrayal of family or friends, the loss of loved ones, or the seeming delays in coming to you for help. Again, the breasts like clusters of grapes signify that which gives nourishment and refreshment to others—another indication of life. If you are a true believer in Jesus Christ, you will also be a tree of life to in the way you speak and practice your faith and love (Proverbs 11:30; Proverbs 15:4). The evidence of saving faith is fruit, loving submission and obedience to Christ and His commands—not only out of duty, but also out of love (this brings joy not a burden).

2. Here we see that Jesus not only cannot take His eyes off of you because of the beauty of His grace in you, but He cannot take His presence from you. He promises (“**I WILL** go up to the palm tree, **I Will** take hold of the boughs thereof”). He wants you to know, dear Christian, that He is nearer to you than one who climbs a tree and grabs hold of the branches. He cannot get much nearer than that. He kisses you with His ordinances. He holds on to you with His sovereign arms and with His comforting promises that will never ever let you go. What is it that so captivates Jesus as He draws near to you? It is your fruitfulness (breasts that are as the clusters of the vine and the fragrance of your breath from your nostrils like apples). Why? Because it is His spiritual DNA that He has implanted in you. You are growing to look more and more like Him.

3. What do all of these images convey in Song 7:8-9a? They all convey an intimate nearness and closeness of Jesus in coming to you, His dear bride. We usually think that when we commune with Christ in His ordinances and sacraments that we are coming to Him—and that is true (e.g. sitting around the Lord’s Table). But Jesus wants you to know from this text that He first desires and promises to come near you. You only come to Him because He is already there waiting for you to come that He might delight in you. That same theme of nearness of communion with you is carried over into the next symbol as well—“**And the roof of thy mouth like the best of wine for my beloved**” (Song 7:9a). The mouth is used for godly speech which is not profane, foolish, angry, or filthy, but is used to praise Him and to edify others (James 3:8-10). We

need to be awakened from our spiritual slumber and deadness to truly hear the poisonous words that come from our mouth. We need His wine.

II. The Effects of Christ's Nearness (Song 7:9b).

A. Effect #1: "that goeth down sweetly."

1. The work of God's abundant grace in the speech of the Christian in turning the mouth from a dead and lifeless tree to a tree of life in praise and worship of Christ and in building up one another has the effect of being like the best wine (not cheap wine) that goes down sweetly into the life of others in your home, in the church, and at work. Just as the master of the wedding in John 2 said that the wine Jesus made was the best wine, so our words are to come from Christ's sweet wine.

2. We don't have to learn harsh or bitter spoken or written words (that comes very natural to us). But what we must learn by God's grace is how to speak the truth of Jesus Christ in love so that it goes down sweetly (Proverbs 15:1-2). This is not just a grace for women, but for men as well, especially in their role as leaders in the home and in the church. It's a grace for you, children, as well. We must be holy in speaking the truth in firmness to the obstinate and rebellious, but we must ever grow in using a sweetness with those who are weak, struggling, and doubting. Knowing the difference between the obstinate (who don't care about the truth) and the weak (who do care about the truth but struggle) is needed by us all. Jesus knew the difference between the Pharisees and the weak, and He did not quench the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed.

B. Effect #2: "causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak."

1. When the roof of our mouth is like the best of wine that goes down sweetly, it causes the lips of those that are asleep to speak. This is a wine of God's grace that doesn't use speech to put others into a spiritual slumber or sleep (as too much natural wine will do), but this spiritual wine amazingly awakens those who are spiritually lazy, apathetic, indifferent, lukewarm, or even dead to use their lips to praise Jesus and to declare His glory and truth in love to family and friends.

2. One of the greatest evidences of God's work of grace in the life of the Christian is the way you use your words. Do you care? You may be careful to curb your eyes, but what about your mouth? This grace of sweetness is not far from any Christian. It is your inheritance in Christ that is implanted in you. Like all of the best wine of Christ's grace in you, you must be diligent to drink freely of that blessed wine of grace daily by way of communion with Jesus Christ in prayer, in His Word, memorization, and meditation. When you fall, you must admit, repent, seek pardon, and renew your love and obedience.

3. Dear ones, some prefer sermons that constantly analyze current events, but what we truly need more than anything is to be like Jesus Christ. Our true preparation and wisdom in facing the trials that come our way in this nation, in our family, at work, and in the church come from practicing godliness, controlling and using our words to edify rather than to tear down (beginning in the home).

4. I have searched for the harsh and condemning words of Jesus toward His bride in this Love Song, but I cannot find them. Jesus doesn't beat you down, and kick you while you are down. He comes near to you and embraces you, lifts you up by His loving promises. We do not serve the Lord out of a slavish bondage and fear of condemnation, but out of love. His everlasting, infinite, and unchanging love for you is what motivates you to keep His commandments. And it is your love for Jesus and your neighbor that summarizes all that God commands you to do.

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