

Session 11 The Ravished Heart of God (Song 4:9)

I. GOD’S HEART IS FILLED WITH DESIRE FOR HIS PEOPLE

- A. One of the most significant truths in the Scripture is that the Lord has deep desire for His people. This truth is expressed poetically in the Song of Solomon as the King declared how “His Bride ravished His heart” (4:9) and she confidently proclaimed that “His desire is toward me” (7:10).

⁹***“You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse...” (Song 4:9)***

¹⁰***“I am my Beloved’s, and His desire is toward me.” (Song 7:10)***

1. ***Ravished heart:*** Webster defines “ravished” as *being filled with emotions of joy or delight because of one who is unusually attractive* (Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary).
 2. ***His desire is toward me:*** Our identity is found in belonging to the King and in His desire for us. She is her Beloved’s *because* His desire is for her. Our obedience is empowered by seeing ourselves as desired by God. We live a life of obedience because He desires us—not because we earn or deserve His love, nor do our actions “motivate” the Lord to desire us.
- B. God loves us in the way that God loves God. The measure of the Father’s love for Jesus is the measure of God’s love for us (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). This is the ultimate statement of our worth.

⁹***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you.” (Jn. 15:9)***

²³***“...that the world may know that You...have loved them as You have loved Me.” (Jn. 17:23)***

II. THE CHRISTIAN PARADIGM OF GOD

- A. The Christian paradigm of God is founded on the revelation of God’s tenderness and love. The idea of God as a tender Father and a passionate Bridegroom was a new thought in religious history in Jesus’ generation (see William Barclay’s commentary on Hebrew 4).
- B. Jewish tradition emphasized God’s holiness—His being *fully separate from sin*. They did not think of a holy God as sharing human experience; they thought Him incapable of sharing our experience. By the very definition of being God, they saw God as being “above” sharing the human condition.
- C. The Stoics (Greek philosophers) believed that God had *no emotions*. They saw the main attribute of God as *apatheia*—His inability to feel anything. They reasoned that if God felt sorrow or joy, He would be vulnerable to being hurt and thus to be influenced or controlled by what He felt. They believed that anyone who affected His emotions would be greater than God for that moment.
- D. The Epicureans, other Greek philosophers, believed that the gods lived *detached*, in eternal bliss. They lived in the intermediate world and were not aware of events occurring on earth.
- E. The Jews understood God as a holy God, *separated from humans*; the Stoics had an *emotionless god*, and the Epicureans a *detached god*. Into this context of religious thought came the new idea of the Christian God who subjected Himself to human emotion and suffering (Heb. 4:15; 5:8).

III. JESUS DELIGHTS IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE (SONG 4:9-10)

- A. The Bride's identity as His sister and spouse is emphasized seven times (4:8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 5:1, 2). Being the King's spouse or Bride speaks of His desire for partnership with His people.
⁹*"You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse [Bride]...¹⁰How fair [beautiful] is your love, My sister, My spouse! How much better than wine is your love..."* (Song 4:9-10)
- B. *My sister*: Being His sister speaks of Jesus embracing our humanity (Mt. 12:50; Heb. 2:17; 4:15). Because of love He endured great suffering as a human—to be like His brethren in all things. Thus, He has sympathy for us in our struggle and gives us *mercy* (forgiveness) and *grace* (power to live).
¹⁴*Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death...¹⁷Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful...High Priest..."* (Heb. 2:14, 17)
¹⁵*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (Heb. 4:15-16)
- C. *How fair is your love*: Jesus sees our love for Him as fair or beautiful (4:10) and as delightful (7:6).
⁶*How fair [beautiful] and how pleasant you are, O love, with your delights!* (Song 7:6)
⁴*...But you shall be called Hephzibah...for the Lord delights in you...* (Isa. 62:4)

IV. JESUS' LEADERSHIP: A BANNER OF LOVE (SONG 2:4-5)

- A. Our experience of God's love grows strong by feeding on God's Word at "His banqueting table." Jesus' banner, or leadership, over our life leads us so that we experience and express His love (2:4).
⁴*He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner [leadership] over me was love.
⁵Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick.* (Song 2:4-5)
- B. *Banqueting house*: Jesus leads us to His banqueting table—the place we celebrate His love for us and ours for Him. The ultimate fulfillment of this is the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7).
- C. *Banner*: In the ancient world, armies marched in battalions under a flag or banner. The banner over our life is His leadership, which leads us to grow in love. His priority—or *banner purpose*—for our life is to lead us in a such a way that we grow in love.
1. His banner over us is His goodness—it includes His ability to overrule negative circumstances by causing everything to work for our good (Rom. 8:28).
 2. We confess, "*His banner over me is love, even when negative things happen*" and confess, "*His banner over me is love, even when I fail.*"
- D. *Sustain me*: She cried out for greater encounter with God's love (2:5). His leadership is effective.

V. CHERISHED BY JESUS (EPH. 5:29)

- A. The Lord transforms His people by cherishing them. He removes the stain of shame from our hearts. One way that He cherishes His people is by affirming the budding virtues in their lives.
²⁷“...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church...²⁸Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies...²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.” (Eph. 5:27-29)
- B. The Lord relates to us on the basis of grace. This includes relating to us according to *what we long to be*—not just according to what we fail to do. He sees our heart more clearly than we do.
⁵...judge nothing...until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God. (1 Cor. 4:5)
1. The whole truth about our life includes much more than the wrong we have done. He defines us by our longing to genuinely love Him. He sees more than our outward actions.
 2. Our obedience *begins* when we sincerely set our heart to obey Him, not *after* we gain full victory in an area. Jesus does not define our life by our struggles.
- C. While Israel was being attacked by a mighty Midianite army, Gideon hid in the winepress in fear (Judg. 6:11-12). An angel appeared to him and called him *a mighty man of valor*. The Lord saw in Gideon what he could not see in himself—seeds of courage that he was not yet operating in. The Lord named Gideon according to what he would be in the future—one of Israel’s great leaders.
¹²And the Angel of the LORD...said to him, “The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!” (Judg. 6:12)
- D. David’s failures are recorded in the Scripture, yet God’s testimony of his life was that David did *all* of God’s will and fulfilled God’s purpose (Acts 13:22, 36).
²²...He testified and said, “I have found David...a man after My heart, who will do all My will...” (Acts 13:22, NAS)
- E. The devil accuses God’s people because he knows that accusation and the fear of being rejected by God will hinder our ability to grow in love. Being preoccupied with condemnation, failure, and shame hinders God’s people from experiencing His love and walking in victory.
¹⁰...the accuser of our brethren...accused them before our God day and night...” (Rev. 12:10)
- F. We are to reckon, or see, ourselves as those who are alive to God, fully accepted by Him. We offer ourselves to God as those “alive to God”—fully accepted and free from condemnation.
¹¹...reckon yourselves [see yourself] to be...alive to God in Christ...¹³present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead [without any condemnation]... (Rom. 6:11-13)
- G. Many believers only see their sin, and thus they feel dirty and ashamed. A person who feels dirty will “live dirty,” while a person who feels clean will “live clean.”

H. We are empowered to love Him by seeing the Lord as the One who loves us.

¹⁹*We love Him because [we understand that] He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)*

⁴⁷*“... her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.” (Lk. 7:47)*

I. The Spirit enables us to comprehend the value, destiny, and beauty that God sees in His people. *Width*—whom it includes (all nations); *Length*—how far it reaches (all sin) and how long it lasts (forever); *Depth*—what it costs Jesus in descending so low; and *Height*—how high it exalts us.

¹⁷*...that you...¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height...¹⁹to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge... (Eph. 3:17-19)*

VI. AFFECTION-BASED OBEDIENCE

- A. **“Affection-based obedience”** is obedience that flows from experiencing Jesus’ affection for us and then giving it back to Him. It is the strongest and most consistent kind of obedience.
- B. **“Duty-based obedience”** is our commitment to obedience even if we do not feel God’s presence. God’s Word requires that we obey God even when we do not feel inspired to do so. We obey because God is our creator and redeemer; thus He has the right to require our obedience.
- C. **“Fear-based obedience”** is obedience motivated by the fear of negative consequences. This is biblical. If we are not motivated to obey God by His Word speaking to our heart, then God will use His rod because He loves us too much to leave us in compromise (Heb. 12:5-11). Fear-based obedience is not sufficient to motivate us to resist the pleasures of sin consistently over time.
1. Many use shame and fear as the primary way to motivate people to obey God. Holiness is often presented in a negative way with many warnings of the consequences of sin.
 2. God’s Word has clear prohibitions, but they were not designed to transform the heart. Yes, we do present the consequences of sin, yet we realize this alone is not sufficient. Something more is needed. The fear of consequences does not overpower the tendency to sin—it merely causes people to sin in secret.

VII. SPIRITUAL REST

- A. **The rest of forgiveness:** We experience this in the assurance that we are forgiven as a free gift in Jesus. We rest in receiving forgiveness because of the finished work of the cross (2 Cor. 5:17).
- B. **The rest of intimacy:** We experience this as we pursue intimacy with God. Our heart is “at rest” as we conclude that our highest purpose is to experience God’s love and grow in intimacy with God.
- C. *“You made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in You.”*
Augustine (AD 354-430).
- D. Many believers who rest in the assurance of being forgiven still strive to find purpose for their life. There is a God-shaped vacuum in our hearts that can only be fulfilled in the “rest of intimacy.”