

How God Views His Bride (Song of Solomon) Part 2

by Paul Washer

A true Christian is characterized by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, passion and desire for God, and serving Him without condition, and is loved and accepted unconditionally by God.

Duration: 1:10:26

Topics: "Bride Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not allowing our hearts to grow cold in our relationship with God. He shares a personal anecdote about pretending to see his wife for the first time ever, highlighting how it changes his perspective. The preacher encourages the audience to reflect on their own relationship with Jesus Christ and recognize if they have neglected it. He urges them to seek God through reading the Word and prayer, rather than turning to worldly distractions. The sermon concludes with a call to awaken the passion and fragrance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles again to the Song of Solomon. Now, as many of you know, I've made a contrast throughout the week between the between two groups of church members, not between spiritual church members and carnal church members, but between Christian church members and lost religious people. And the Southern Baptist Convention is absolutely full of lost religious people who believe that they're going to heaven because one time they prayed a prayer and asked Jesus Christ to come into their heart.

But there's no fruit in their life. There's no desire for God. There's no passion for his glory or seeking his face or serving him.

It's just basically their Christianity is reduced down to nothing more than a little bit of morality and some church attendance. And some of the greatest theologians today and in the Southern Baptist Convention would say that if you were to honestly take scripture, you would have to declare that at least 10 to that no more than 10 to 15 percent of all Southern Baptists or even Christian. I, being Southern Baptist and a teacher among Southern Baptists, would heartily agree.

It's simply the truth. We've taken the gospel and reduced it down to nothing. We've taken the Christian life and reduced it down to nothing.

So tonight, when I share what I'm going to share to some people who are church members, this will be very alien because I'm going to talk about an experience with Jesus Christ that possibly they've never even known. And when I begin to use certain language, they're going to say, well, no, that that never happened to me. And if as I go down through this speaking about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and you realize I don't even understand his language, then maybe.

You ought to reconsider the confidence you have in a salvation that may be false, that may be false, and we're in the Song of Solomon, chapter four. And last night we went through verse seven, down through verse 15, speaking about the true Christian and his righteous standing in the person of Jesus Christ, that if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. But not only that, if any man be in Christ, God sees him in a completely different light.

And we saw in verse seven, you are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you. This verse right here destroys the philosophy and teaching of many denominations that teach a works salvation that, well, you just you know, you you've got to work hard and do your best and do the right thing. And then one day, you know, God judges you.

He will see you were a pretty good person and allow you to come in. We see that that's totally wrong, because in order to be in the presence of God, you have to be altogether beautiful without one blemish. And the only way that can happen is if you have stopped trusting.

In your ability to make yourself acceptable to God and you have trusted in Christ and Christ alone, we are accepted, the Bible says, in the beloved, in the beloved. Let me just step back for a moment and just share with you something very important. You've been hearing something throughout this week of, first of all, we are saved only by grace, only by faith.

At the same time, I'm telling you that if there's no fruit in your life, you're lost. And some people might say, well, is it believing in Jesus Christ plus fruit? No, it's believing in Jesus Christ unto salvation. But what you have to understand is there's a thing in the Bible called conversion.

There's a thing in the Bible called regeneration, it popular and in John chapter three, it's referred to as being born again. That's just not poetic language. What is going on there is this.

The Bible is speaking that when a person truly comes to know Christ, they have been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a real supernatural work of God that changes them and changes their heart so that they love God and desire to follow him and desire to bear fruit. That's why John says in first John that the that the commandments of God for a child of God are not burdensome.

He likes doing them. And as I've said many times throughout the week, there's so many people who believe that the Christian life is when you stop doing all the evil things you love and begin doing all the righteous religious things you hate in order to go to heaven. If you love wicked things.

It's because you are wicked and your heart has not been changed, if you do not like righteous things, things set forth by the word of God, if they're not pleasing to you, if they're not a delight to you, but they're a burden and a drudgery, then you need to realize that whatever assurance you have of salvation is false. It is so deadly, the religious lie, it is so deadly. As I said, I have family who who say, you know, their whole form of Christianity is I did the right thing.

I did the right thing. I'm doing the right thing. I made the right decision.

I got baptized. I go to church. I do the right thing.

But a personal, passionate relationship with Jesus Christ is absolutely foreign to them. If you were to speak of your heart being exploded with the love of God, they wouldn't even know what you're talking about. That's frightening.

Well, we're going to talk about that tonight, the passionate aspect of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Now, I hope that you understand. Verse 16 of chapter four, Awake, O North Wind, and come, Wind of the South.

Make my garden breathe out fragrance. Let its spices be wafted abroad. May my beloved come into his garden and eat his choice fruit.

Now, what do we have here? We have a young maiden, not at all of the upper crust. We have a very plain and simple maiden who has caught the eye of the king. The great king of Israel, and even farther than that, when we extend this, the great king of kings.

So here is a maiden, probably grew up in pasture lands, a plain, not extravagant, as I said, not from the upper crust maiden. And she's made a garden and she's made a garden for her beloved. She has made a garden for the king.

Now, I want you to look at something that's very, very important. She has labored. She has worked for one purpose.

Her great desire is that this one she loves will give her a glance. This one she loves will look at all her labor, all that she's done, all her service, and be pleased and accept what she has done from her hand as a gift. She's so enthralled by him.

All she wants is to catch his attention, to spend time with him. Now, let's apply this to you, maybe, or I know me better. I'll apply it to me.

Before I became a Christian, as I have said many, many times, very wicked young man, self-centered, conceited. You look up jerk in the dictionary. There was my picture.

It's absolutely everything wrong. Care less about people, care less about God. But in one day, one day, someone shared the gospel with me.

And then a few weeks later, I'm just in the undergraduate library, the University of Texas, running off a few oil surveys. And it was like all of a sudden, Jesus Christ is Savior. What that guy told me is true.

Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ is glorious. Jesus Christ is beautiful.

I walked out of that building a totally and completely different human being. It wasn't turning over a new leaf. It wasn't saying, oh, I've got to stop drinking.

I've got to stop partying. I've got to stop doing all these things. They were gone.

They were grotesque shadows of a wicked past. It wasn't a struggle of what do I need to let go? All I could see was the glory and the beauty of this one who died for me. And then for the next several months, for the next several months, it was just Jesus.

I mean, go outside and look at the clouds. It was Jesus. You couldn't even talk about anything else.

Do you remember that time when the only thing after He saved you was Jesus? You couldn't think about anything but Jesus. Whenever you got in a conversation, the only thing you wanted to talk about was Jesus. Every time you looked up, Jesus.

And the only thing that you wanted to do was to know Him and to serve Him and to do anything possible to catch His attention, to spend time with Him. Do you remember when you were a brand new Christian crying out, Oh, Lord, visit me. Oh, Lord, I want Your presence.

Oh, Lord, teach me something in Your Word. Oh, Lord, just everywhere You were. So many church members look at me and go, I don't know what you're talking about.

I mean, I did what I was supposed to do. I prayed that prayer. I was baptized.

I try to do good. What are you talking about? I'm talking about a person who's truly met Christ, not a person who prayed a prayer. Do any of you in this room remember when you were first converted and the passion that filled your heart and you went through what is wrongly called a honeymoon period? When it seemed like Jesus Christ was everywhere and everything in your life? Do you remember that time? When you read the Word and you didn't care about anything else? When you prayed because you honestly believed that He would meet with you? When you sought Him and spoke with Him and talked to Him and even seemed to feel His presence in your life? Do any of you know what I'm talking about? Because pity you if you don't.

You see, salvation is not just, I did the right thing. It is an encounter with the resurrected, living Jesus Christ. And when He comes into your life, there will be a sense in which He calls you, as we spoke about last night, and says, come with me.

And you walk with Him. And it is so real. And it is so pleasant.

And it is so all-consuming. It's not that you just added one little thing to your life to make it better. He became your life.

Do you remember those times? Well, that's what we see here. Now, she says, may my beloved come into His garden and eat its choice fruits. I remember when I first became a Christian, all I wanted to do, it was like honestly thinking and believing.

I just, whatever I do, I want to do so it will please Him, so that He will be happy. And I want to study my Word. And I want to study and I want to pray.

And I want to seek Him. And if He would just come. And there were some times when I'd be reading the Word.

Has this ever happened to you? Sometimes when I was reading the Word, and you could just see that He was teaching you something. That it was Him. That the words were just jumping off of the page.

And then there were times when you would pray. You would really pray. Not those dead prayers that you pray now about somebody's bad knee.

But you would get on your knees and just say, oh Lord, if I don't know more of You, I'm going to die. Oh Lord, if You don't just move in my heart and show me more of You, I'm so thirsty for You. Like a deer paneth at the water brook, oh Lord, so my heart cryeth after Thee.

And there were some times when He actually seemed to really visit you. You could sense His presence. And it wasn't just emotion.

It was Him. Do you remember times in your younger years as a Christian that all you wanted was Jesus? And do you remember times when you sought Him and He came? And it was all you wanted. But then we look, verse 5. He says, I have come into My garden, My sister, My bride.

I have gathered My mirth along with My balsam. I have eaten My honeycomb and My honey. I have drunk My wine and My milk.

Now, do you remember when you would serve the Lord with zeal just to please Him? Was there ever a time when you served the Lord with zeal that He didn't accept from your hand your service? Now this is one of the most beautiful things about the Lord. I want you to look at something for a minute. Here is a peasant girl who has built a garden for the greatest king of all the earth.

What does he need with her garden? He has 10,000 men working every day on all his gardens all over Israel. What does he need with a little puny garden from this little girl? You know, most kings of the earth would have walked by her garden, stuck up their nose, even got angry that she would offer something so puny to him when he is the greatest king of kings. He doesn't need her cucumbers.

He doesn't need her garden. He has 10,000 men working every day on every garden in every province in every place that he owns. God has His Charles Spurgeons.

And God has His Jonathan Edwards and His John Pipers and His R.C. Sprouls and His John MacArthurs. God has men who can quote the entire New Testament off the top of His head. He has men and women that are right now at this moment running back and forth in the jungle serving Him.

He has great servants. What does He need from you? You come to church. You have a little ministry.

You leave. And sometimes you sit there, believer, and you go, What could God ever want from me? I mean, look at all these great servants He has had down through history. What am I in His kingdom? And what is my service in His kingdom? I mean, all I do is hand out brochures or hand out pamphlets on Sunday morning.

I'm an usher. I can't teach the Bible very well, but if someone needs their plumbing fixed in the church, I guess I can help them. I mean, I'm not a great Christian.

I'm not a great preacher. I'm not a great this and I'm not a great that. Who am I in the kingdom? Some just unnoticed believer who will maybe squeak through the cracks.

What you have to realize is your King is not like all the other kings of the earth. Everything that you offer Him... Notice, He comes into her garden and He says, I receive My garden. He calls it His.

He takes it. He doesn't despise her small offering. He doesn't look at her and say, Well, I have great servants all over this kingdom making Me gardens.

I don't need what you have. No, He fully embraces and receives everything that she offers Him. One of the most terrible things in Christianity today, even real Christianity today, is this idea that there's a pecking order.

Well, God has His great servants and then God has His lesser servants. That is a damnable lie. I don't know how much stronger to say it.

It's of the devil. It deserves hell. It's condemning and it's wrong.

There is no pecking order in the kingdom of God. God does not love Charles Spurgeon more than you. He does not take notice of John Piper more than He takes notice of you.

You will not get to heaven and be last. There will not be people running around in heaven with big crowns on their head and driving Cadillacs while you have a paper mache crown on a scooter. That's a damnable lie made up by preachers who want to manipulate people.

Jesus said in the Bible, The first will be last and the last will be first. Do you know what happens when the first is last and the last is first? I'll tell you what happens when the first is last and the last is first. There are no longer any firsts or lasts.

That's His whole point. The only thing required of thee as a believer is to walk in the will of God and His providence for you. And if you serve in this church totally and completely unnoticed all the days of your life, your glory may be greater than the one who built 350 churches in Ethiopia.

You need to see that there is no pecking order in the kingdom. None. The peasant girl is as pleasing as the mighty warrior and the wise prophet and the telling sage and the mighty king.

And so everything that you offer Him is never despised. If it is offered out of a heart trembling and broken, if it is offered in love, if your service is given to Him as an act of praise, it is always accepted. I hear sometimes people say, man, that guy is one of the special ones.

Or man, God must truly treasure him. Or he has a secret communion with God that others could only dream about. Rot.

That is rot. Every dear child, every one gathered to Jesus Christ is precious. And precious to the same degree.

You see, you and I live in a world where we are shut out. There are places on this planet that none of us in this church can go. We don't have enough money.

We don't have enough prestige. We are not the beautiful people. There are societies we can't belong to.

There are clubs we can't join. No supermodels among us. But you see, all of that, when you pass through the door of Christ's kingdom, totally and completely disappears.

And now there is one great king and a whole bunch of beloved children. We have nothing to prove. We have nothing to gain.

He has done it all. We are simply loved. And you need to rest in Him and rest in His providence that absolutely everything you do in His name is received.

Your service in this church, just knowing this truth, your service in this church ought to grow. Thinking that nothing is done in vain. Nothing is overlooked.

And if you will serve Him in your capacity with passion, it will never be despised. It will never be ranked below someone else. The most wonderful thing in the world is that we are deeply and eternally and unconditionally loved.

And so we can just go out there and serve Him. Let me give you an illustration. It may help you understand this.

A dear friend of mine who has mentored me for years, he was a physics major. Brilliant, brilliant man. And so his last semester in college, he had to take a certain physics course that was absolutely the weeder course at the university.

So difficult. Absolutely impossible. And so there were five guys in there.

They were five guys. They were either physics majors or math majors. They loved physics.

They loved mathematics. And the reason they were in there is not because they had to, but because they loved the stuff. The professor walked in.

Very famous for being tough. He walked in. He looked at everybody and he said this.

Okay. You've all got an A. Now let's enjoy the material. You've all got an A. Now let's enjoy the material.

You see, that's what it comes down to. If you are in Christ Jesus, you are altogether lovely, there is no blemish in you, you've got an A. Now let's just enjoy the Christian life. Let's just follow Him.

What if I fail? No problem. Still loves you. What if I'm not what everyone else is? What everyone else is, because they are by the grace of God and cannot be attributed to them anyways? You're free.

It's what it means to be free. You're just loved. What if I don't meet the conditions? Well, you never have.

You didn't meet the conditions to get saved, so you expect to meet them now to stay saved. You didn't meet the conditions to get in His favor, so do you plan on meeting the conditions to stay in His favor? And I say, well, hold it. Are you saying that if we're in Christ Jesus, we can just live like hellions and everything's okay? I'm saying if you're in Christ Jesus, you won't want to live like hellions.

You see, now let me finish the illustration. Let's say that that professor, that class, has those five men in it that love physics. They just love it.

But let's say that there's five other people in that class that hate physics, but they have to take the class to graduate. The professor walks in and says, you've all got an A. Let's just enjoy the material. The five guys who love physics go, you mean we can just study this and not have to worry about a grade? You mean we can read this and enjoy this and talk about this and discuss it and all sorts of things and we don't have to worry about a test? We can just enjoy the material? And the professor says, yeah.

But the other five that hate physics, what they do is they close the book and go, you mean we got an A and we don't have to read this stuff? And they walk out the door and throw the book in the trash can. You see, when a true believer hears that he's unconditionally loved and his salvation does not depend on him

or his standing before God does not depend on him, that true believer says, you mean I got an A and I can just enjoy the material? I can just follow Him and I don't have to be afraid of anything anymore? I don't have to be afraid of judgment? I don't have to be afraid of wrath? I don't have to be afraid of a pecking order and being last in Heaven? I can just love Him and enjoy this stuff? But the carnal, wicked church member who goes to church, but in reality doesn't love Jesus and hates God, but is going to Heaven because he prayed a prayer, he goes, you mean I can get to Heaven and I don't have to do any of this stuff? You see the difference? There's the difference between a true Christian and a lost man. The Christian looks at the grace of God and says, oh, I want to follow Him so much more now.

I want to serve Him so much more. And the lost church member who is on his way to Hell says, let's just sin. Now, I want us to go on and I want you to see something.

First of all, in v. 16 of chapter 4 and in v. 1 of chapter 5 you see something. You see a young lady who is absolutely passionate about the King. She wants the King.

She wants the King to notice her. She wants to do things for the King. I mean, she is totally in love with this guy.

She is so passionate about Him. She desires Him. She wants Him.

But then we get to v. 2. I was asleep, but my heart was awake. A voice, my beloved, was knocking, open to be my sister, my darling, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is drenched with dew, my locks with the damp of the night. Now what's going on here? This King that at one time she so passionately desires, He comes and visits her.

Now notice, He doesn't ask for permission to visit her. Why? Because love never believes that it has to ask permission to come for a visit. Love believes that it will always be accepted when it knocks on the door.

So He comes at a time she would least expect it and He knocks on the door. But what does she say? V. 3, I've taken off my dress. How can I put it on again? I've washed my feet.

How can I dirty them again? Now look at what has happened. There was a time when this girl would go out into the marketplace and walk around all day in circles with a basket of fish on her head just in hopes that she would bump into this guy. She would do absolutely everything to have a meeting with him.

She was so in love with him. But now look at her. He comes to her door and she nonchalantly says, look, could you come some other time? I mean, it's such an inconvenience for me to get out of bed.

I mean, after all, I've taken off my dress, my feet. I don't want them to get dirty. Can you relate to that? There was a time when you were a brand new Christian, when you sought the Lord.

You wanted to see Him. You wanted to see the reality of Him. You wanted Him to work in your life.

You prayed, not just for Auntie Em's knee. No, you prayed to see His face, to know Him. You opened up the Word.

You sought Him out. And you wanted just to know the Lord. But years have gone by now and your hearts become cold and dry.

I mean, I've seen this in my own life. After preaching, sometimes after preaching, I've been up here preaching and preaching about God and our relationship to Him and be so tired after preaching three or four times a day and then go home and sit in a chair and just maybe turn on the hunting and fishing channel or something. I'm just totally wore out.

And I'll feel God. I'll feel the Lord tug at the back of my shirt saying, come away with me, Paul. You need to rest, but rest with me.

Come away. Open up the Word. Get on your knees.

Seek my face. And it's like I'm just like this girl. I go, Lord, I've been preaching.

I've preached four times today. I'm wore out. What more do you want? Do you see that? Do you remember when you used to run to the Word? Do you remember when you used to run to prayer? Now you run to the TV.

You're tired and so you can't be with Him, and yet He's the only one who can make you not tired. We become so cold. I see it just everywhere, especially among ministers, because the ministry will steal you from God so fast.

Work in the church will steal you from God more than anything else. God, can't you see I'm working all day? Martha, Martha. Lose a personal relationship with Him.

Being wore out in the ministry. There was a time when our heart was on fire. We just wanted to know Him, seek Him, praise Him, follow Him.

But now, when the heart cools off, it becomes almost like a burden. How many times has the Lord tugged on your heart? Maybe after work or in the morning. Maybe wake you up in the middle of the night and you know.

How many of you? I just want to see if anyone's understanding. Wake you up in the middle of the night and say, come away with me and pray. Raise your hand.

How many of you know what I'm talking about? And you pretend that it's not Him. There was a time when you were so young that if a bird chirped, you thought it was God talking to you. But then now, even when the Lord comes to you and says, come on, pull away with me.

Spend some time with me. And it's the Lord. You say, oh, you know, God doesn't do that nowadays.

That wasn't God. That was just my emotions. He didn't save you.

Let me tell you something. I guess I'm going to get as close as I can again to cussing another damnable lie is God saved you to serve. God did not save you to serve.

God didn't even save you so that you'd love Him. God saved you so that He could love you. And our life is to be a response to that love.

He doesn't need your service. One thing about our missionary society, you know, you hear these TV evangelists, you know, if you don't support our ministry, it's going down and all this stuff. And I'm always going, let it go down, let it go down.

Because you see, if I die today, it doesn't hurt the kingdom of God. God doesn't need me. God doesn't need you.

But He does desire you. All this running around, all these great plans, all these things we're going to do in the name of God. It's like we're all whirling around, busy, doing all this stuff.

And see, that's what Revelation 3.20 is all about. Jesus is not knocking on the door of a sinner's heart in Revelation 3.20. He's not. That's not what that verse means.

What it means is, here's First Baptist Church killing. And you've got a lot of plans to do a lot of things in Jesus' name. And they're sincere.

You want to win people to Christ. Your church is overflowing now. Sooner or later you have to think about building a building.

There's just all kinds of things going on. But what if Jesus is standing out there while all of you are so busy, and He's standing out the back of that door knocking on it and going, does anyone hear my voice? I just want to come in and have dinner with you. I saved you.

Why did you marry? Think about that for a moment. Why did you get married? A tax break? It was the right thing? I mean, why did you get married? You got married because of passion. You know how I knew I wanted to marry Charo, my wife? It's because I didn't have to do anything with her.

I'm one of these guys that's like, okay, let's go climb a mountain today or let's shoot some rapids or let's go into the jungle or let's do something. But I didn't have to do anything with her. I could just sit there.

It was good enough. She's here. That's good.

Remember when your relationship with Jesus Christ was like that? Do you see how far we can fall when we don't even spend time with Him? Now, listen, dear saint. You know how hard I preach and everything like that, but I don't want ever... I want to condemn sinners. I never want to condemn saints.

I want to teach them. I don't want you to walk out of here going, He's right. I've just neglected my relationship with the Lord.

You've made some progress today. Think about it. If that's what you've recognized, you've made some progress.

Alright, this is good. What's happening here is good. Alright, I've just neglected Him.

That's good. Now let's get on our path back to not neglecting Him anymore. Go on.

It says this, verse 4, My Beloved extended His hand through the opening, and my feelings were aroused for Him. I arose to open to My Beloved, and my hands dripped with mirth, and my fingers with liquid mirth, on the handles of the bolt. I opened to My Beloved, but My Beloved had turned away and had gone.

Now, what's going on? She has gotten cold in her heart towards Him. As I said, there was a time when she'd do absolutely anything in her power to bump into this guy. She just wanted to be with him.

But now it's grown cold. She's got Him. She's got Him.

Some of you men, if you treated your wife when you were dating like you treat her now, she wouldn't be your wife right now. You were all, you know, Señor Romántico. You were all romantic and everything else and opening doors.

And if she just called you on the phone, sure, Bass Tournament, check it off. I don't want to go. She called.

I mean, you were passionate. And what happened? Did you stop loving her? No, probably not. It's just that when you're around something all the time, you just lose something.

I remember the first time I was going across the Andes Mountains and I was just absolutely astounded. And there was this old missionary with me. We were on this train and we were going over the highest pass in the world, train pass in the world, at least at that time.

We were up at about 16,000 feet. The mountains were just absolutely unbelievable. I just couldn't hardly breathe.

I was so excited. And I looked over at the old missionary and he's just snoring. I thought, what's wrong with this guy? Doesn't he have any passion for beauty and for the majesty of all this? A few years ago, I took a bunch of college students across the same pass.

I snored. Why? Did the beauty of the mountain decrease? No. It had grown common for me.

It had grown common. It had grown common. Sometimes when I'm coming home from the office, I'll pretend.

I'll say, okay, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to pretend that when I walk through this door, I'm going to see my wife for the first time ever and try to look at her with this is the first time I'm ever going to lay my eyes on my wife. You just can't believe how it changes things.

The worst crime in the world is for a heart to grow cold. And that's what's happened to her heart. And that's what's happened to ours.

But he sticks his hand in through. He begins to work. And finally, what does she do? She jumps up out of the bed and she comes running over there and she says, her hand drips with mirth.

Now what does that mean? This is what it means. When someone would come calling back in Oriental time, when someone would come calling like a man would come calling for his bride or his future spouse, he would sometimes carry a bag that had his particular scent. There would be a mixture of myrrh and other things.

And it was like a fragrance. And he would rub it all over the door handles so that if you weren't home, at least when the girl came home, she would notice, he's been here. He's been here.

And so she finally gets up. She delays. She finally gets up.

But when she gets up, the only thing left of him is a fragrance. That's all. He's not there anymore.

Love delayed, the response delayed is sometimes a very dangerous thing. You see, love is quite easily offended. I think that's one of the reasons why the symbol of the Holy Spirit in Scripture is a dove, not a bull.

It can be quickly offended, grieved, quenched. Christ comes to you and calls. There was a time in your young Christian life when if you thought Jesus Christ was calling you and telling you to come away with Him, you jumped at it in a second.

But then as time goes on, as time goes on, no more passion, no more desire to follow Him. It just becomes kind of a routine. And then when finally your heart does kind of get aroused, you go and pray, but it seems like no one's there.

You spend most of your time, most older believers, a lot of them, who fall into this trap. They spend all their time crying out for God to come back. It seems that He's never there.

And when they pray, it seems like there's a ceiling of bronze over their head. Why? You can offend love only so many times. And it kind of just draws back.

Now, but don't make this mistake. It's not that your heart has been unresponsive and now God is punishing you. That's not the way He works with His children.

Here's what God is doing to you. He's doing the same thing that I told you I did to my little boy when he would wander off in the woods and would not stay with me. And I hid behind a tree until finally he realized he was alone and he got scared.

And I let him get scared for a little while so that he would learn never to wander away from his father again. Those times when you pray, and they're frequent now, you pray and there's no sense of God's presence and there's no sense of His power, and it feels like you're just going through a routine in your life. Do you remember when you seemed to just feel the presence of Christ when you were a brand new believer? And now that just seems to be gone and you wonder what's happened? Don't think He's punishing you.

He's pulling back to teach you. He's not one of these gods who says, well, I'll show you. He's just pulled back a bit.

And He's waiting for you to seek Him and to seek Him and to seek Him. And if you seek Him, you will find Him because His love and His disposition toward you has not changed. He does not love you less in His silence.

He's simply in His great love for you teaching you something. How dangerous it is for your heart to grow cold and to not respond to Him when He prompts you to follow. Sometimes when we're a brand new believer, it just seems like God's everywhere.

And then it seems after a while that there's nothing. We're just going through the motions. She finally gets to her feet, but when she gets there, there's just something of a fragrance left.

But the person himself is not there. I remember one of the dumbest things I've ever done in my life. It was unbiblical and it was wrong.

After my wife and I were married, we had to be separated for 82 days because she had to come back to the States and finish her degree and I had to go into the jungle. You should never be separated from your wife. Like that.

Never. But I remember being in the jungle for the longest time and coming out and I made it back to our little base apartment in Lima, Peru. And I remember walking in there and I missed her so much I thought I was going to die.

And finally I went into our bedroom and I pulled out one of her drawers and there in the drawer was a sweater. And on that sweater was a fragrance that she would always wear. And I can remember just sitting there on that bed holding that sweater.

I could sense a fragrance, but she was gone. Sometimes that's how many Christians live their Christian life. After walking with Christ and after being so close to Him, they've been so unresponsive.

Their heart's been pulled away. It's grown cold. And it seems like they spend most of their years in their Christian life just walking around with a fragrance of what used to be.

But now look what happens. She says in verse 6, I opened to My Beloved, but My Beloved had turned away and had gone. My heart went out to Him as He spoke.

I searched for Him, but I did not find Him. Does that describe your prayer life now? It just seems to be, you know, routine. It doesn't seem like there's much of Christ in it.

And then it says, I called out to Him, but He did not answer. The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found Me. They struck Me and wounded Me.

The guardsmen of the wall took away My shawl from Me. Now, what's going on? She's burst out into the night and she's realized what she's lost and she's looking for Him. But there's a dangerous thing.

A bride without her groom is not very safe. And she's wandering around this city and the watchmen on the walls, they find her, they strike her, they wound her. Now I want you to realize something.

If she had been walking at that moment beside the king, those watchmen on the wall wouldn't even have dared to look her in the eye. They would have been so afraid. They wouldn't even have addressed her.

They would have put their head down and turned away so as to not offend her because she was walking beside the king. The only thing that protected that bride was the presence of the king. She doesn't have the presence of the king any longer and the world will tear her apart.

And that's the same way for you. Do you remember what Moses said after Israel had committed abomination after abomination? God tested Moses and there was this thing about whether or not God was going to continue on with Israel, whether His presence would continue on. And Moses said, if you don't go with us, we can't go.

What distinguishes us from all the peoples of the land except Your presence? And what is it that distinguishes you from all the people of the land except the presence of Christ in your life? I want to tell you something. I know people with great theology. I know people that are brilliant.

I know people who are great preachers and famous preachers and this and that and everything else. But I also know people who when they walk in the room, it's like the presence of Christ walked in with them. They are an entirely different sort of person.

And the one thing that distinguishes the believer more than everything else is the presence and power of Christ in his life. I'll never forget, I was working, going back and forth in the Marignon River in the province of Condorconque in the deep part of the jungle in northern Peru. And I had always heard about this German lady named Hermana Dorothy.

Sister Dorothy. She was a lady who was born in Germany. And she came there and she lived for 30 years among the Aguaruna people.

I'd always heard about her. Never came in contact with her. And then one day I pulled into this post, Santa Maria de Nieva, and I'm there talking to some Indian believers and someone said that Miss Dorothy was like an hour and a half down the river.

Well, my boat was all messed up and so I went into the military police type thing and I said, look, I need to rent a boat from you. They said, what are you talking about? I said, I need a boat. My boat is getting fixed.

I need a boat. So I worked out a deal and I got one of their boats and I went down an hour and a half to see her. So I get out of the boat.

Some Indians meet me and I said, I want to see Miss Dorothy. And they said, no. They guarded her like she was a treasure.

And I said, well, I'm Brother Paul and I've worked. And so they knew of me. And they said, okay, but you'll have to sit here on the ground because she's sleeping.

So I sat on the ground for about an hour and a half right outside this little hut made out of cane and leaves and everything, dirt floor hut. And all of a sudden, I heard kind of someone getting up inside. And this woman came out.

You could tell that in her youth she must have been spectacularly beautiful. She was in her 60s. She had her hair cut across like this, just like her blonde, grayish hair, cut like that, just kind of like the Agua Duna Indians.

She had an old dress on. And then she had just a pair of these little, you know, \$2 Kmart flip-flops, rubber things. And her legs were just eaten up by songos and everything.

It's a bug that you just don't want to mess with them. And she comes out like this. And I'll never forget.

The presence of Christ was so great in her life that the moment I looked up at her, I just broke down crying. Just broke down crying. Folks, it's more than morality.

It's more than doing the right thing and keeping a few rules. The presence of Jesus Christ. And it is that that distinguishes us.

Most of you, all of us, would do well to spend a great deal of time crying out to God. I don't care about anything, Lord. I just want to know Your presence.

I want Your presence. Your life in my life. I want my personal relationship with You to be at maximum.

You start out that way when you're young, especially young preachers. Lord, I just want Your presence. I just want to know You.

I just want to see Your face. Lord, come, help me. I'm like a deer that paneth at the water brook.

Oh God! And then it's more all of that is replaced by ministry, ministry, ministry, ministry until we forget and sometimes even scoff at younger men who still have that passion. Oh, my dear friend, seek Him. Now, in verse 8, she says, I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, as to what will you tell Him? For I am lovestruck, and they answer, what kind of Beloved is your Beloved, O most beautiful of women? What kind of Beloved is your Beloved that thus you adjure us? She's going to the daughters of Jerusalem.

She looks at Him and she says, Go find my Beloved. Go seek Him for me. And they said, kind of, why? I mean, He can't be all that.

I mean, He came to your bedroom. You couldn't even get out of bed. Why should we seek this guy? I mean, my goodness.

He isn't that much to you. Why should He be that much to us? Why should we go look for Him? Church, you go out into this community. You witness the people.

You knock on doors. You hand out tracts. You invite people to revivals.

And you say, hey, come hear about, you know, come see Jesus. You know, you need Jesus. And they go, why? I mean, I can look at your life.

Why should I look for Him? I mean, you supposedly know Him and He's not that big a deal to you. I mean, my goodness. I look at your life.

You care more about every sort of thing on the face of the earth than you care about Jesus. I mean, you're telling me to look for Him. Why should I look for Him? You don't even look for Him.

Happens, doesn't it? We tell other people to seek Him. But they know for a fact that our hearts have grown cold. And we don't even seek Him that much.

And then what happens? Revival. Verse 10. You see, she's beginning to realize what she lost.

She's beginning to realize how far she fell. She's beginning to realize her first love. And she says, my beloved is dazzling and rooty, outstanding among 10,000.

His head is like gold, pure gold. His locks are like clusters of dates and black as a raven. Do you want to know something about verse 11? It doesn't make any sense.

The woman's beside herself. And she goes all the way down through here. You know, finishes in 16.

His mouth is full of sweetness and He is wholly desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. She begins to experience a personal revival in her love relationship with this man.

She's beginning to remember all that He is and all that she has lost. And she's spurred on by the rebuke of the others who say, why should we look for Him? You don't even care. And she begins to remember.

And she goes wild. She begins to talk about Him in such a way that her words don't even make sense anymore. She's so, she's inflamed again.

I remember one time watching W.A. Criswell preach. I'll never forget this as long as I live. He was standing up.

You know, W.A. Criswell, First Baptist Church, Dallas. And he was standing up there giving a typical, very structured First Baptist Church sermon and delivering it and exegetically correct and just everything proper. I don't know if he was in Colossians or where he was.

But all of a sudden he read a text. He read a verse about Jesus. And I'll never forget.

He looked down like this and he goes... And he threw his hands up in the air and he slapped them down on his side and he goes, Oh, folks, let me tell you about my Jesus. And that man went wild. For about five to ten minutes he went absolutely wild.

And that place came apart. When your passion for Christ, when you remember and your passion for Christ is rekindled, my goodness, it has set the whole place on fire. They asked Benjamin Franklin one time why did he come to hear Whitefield preach.

He said, Mr. Franklin, you don't believe what George Whitefield is preaching. And he said, no, I don't believe what he's preaching, but he does. And I want to watch him.

Ravenhill used to say, set a man on fire and even unbelievers will come to watch him burn. Passion for Christ. Passion for Christ.

Not just I do the right thing. What if you were to go home? Someone asked me one day when I was in Romania and I was getting ready to come home, they said, Brother Paul, what's the first thing you're going to do when you get home? I said, I'm going to kiss my wife. They said, what's the second thing you're going to do? I said, I'm going to put down my luggage.

But what if I come home? You know, you come home one day from work. Your wife answers the door. You give her a big old smooch and a big old hug.

And she says, what was that about? You say, well, in the Good Husband Manual here, page 32 says that when I come home, I ought to do this because it's the right thing to do. She's going to feed you that book page by page. You are going to break her heart in a million pieces.

You stay with a woman and treat a woman right because it's the right thing to do and you will kill her. She wants to know that you do this because your heart is aflame. Now, let me teach you something.

I had a preacher one time who was preaching. I was a young guy and I was even more stupid than I am now and said things even more dumb than I do now. I didn't know it was going to make him mad.

But he's up there preaching and he's going, you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. You need to walk in the Holy Spirit. You need to walk in the Holy Spirit, to which I was heartily in agreement.

But he never told us how to do it. So after the sermon, I went up and said, sir, I just have a question. I agree with you.

We need to walk in the Holy Spirit. But what does that mean? I don't have a clue what that means. He got so mad because apparently he didn't have a clue either.

We always tell you what to do. We need to tell you how to do it. Well now, here's the thing on you need to love God.

You know, someone comes up to me and says, you know, you need to love God more. I just go, duh. I mean, what do you mean I need to love God more? I know I need to love God more.

As a matter of fact, the great burden of my heart is I don't love God like I ought to. So don't come telling me I ought to love God more. I know that.

Tell me how I can come to love God more. Okay, I'm going to tell you. This is how you come to love God more.

First of all, to say that you're going to love God more is equivalent to saying you're going to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. You can't do that. Have you ever thought about that? How can you make yourself love God more? And so you sit there and go, well, I'm in a quagmire.

What should I do? God, help me to love you more. I mean, what do we do? Well, here's what Scripture teaches us, just in a nutshell. You want to love God more? This is the way you do it.

First of all, you have to be sure that you're born again. That you really know Him. He really knows you.

You say, okay, I'm a Christian. I bear fruit. I have assurance.

What next? All right. I love my wife now, 14 years later, much more than I did when we were first married. Why? Even though my wife is not perfect, like her husband, even though she is not perfect, in the 14 years that I have got to know her, even though I have seen flaws, I see more of her virtue and her excellency, and I love her more because I know more about her.

Now, with God, you don't have to worry about finding a flaw. How can you come to love God more? By knowing God more. Finding out in His Word who He is.

And the more you find out about who He is, the more you will love Him. Now, throw this at you. How many churches in the Southern Baptist Convention do you think in the last year spent hardly any time at all teaching and discussing the attributes of God? We teach about how to balance your checkbook.

We teach about how you ought to do this and not do that, and everything else. But once you think about it, the most important thing, let not a rich man boast of his riches. Let not a strong man boast of his strength.

Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom. But let him who boasts, boast in this, that he knows Me. And he goes on to mention a few of his attributes.

You want to love God more? Then study the Scriptures in prayer to find out who He is and what He has done. And the more you know about Him, the more you will love Him. Just the attribute of the beauty of God.

Have you ever thought about that? When you take into consideration, have you ever studied the beauty of God? Theologians would tell you that the beauty of God is so immense that if you were to take one glance, a glimpse of His beauty, and catch it with the natural eye, you would go insane. His beauty is so great that your mind could not comprehend it and your heart could not hold it. Not even a glimpse.

That God is so beautiful, He must condescend or humble Himself to take His eyes off of Himself to look at any other thing. The things that God has prepared for you down through the ages, everything, the more you begin to understand who He is, what He's done, and what He has prepared for you, the more you will love Him. The greatest need you have is to know Him.

To know Him. Now we're going to finish up in chapter 6. I bet you never did an expositional sermon two chapters long. 6.1 Where has your Beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your Beloved turned that we may seek Him with you? Look, when she went wild about Christ, when she caught on fire, what happens? Others want to know.

This church cultivates a passion for Jesus Christ. You won't have to worry much about soul winning. You cultivate a passion for Jesus Christ in your daily life, you will draw the attention of this community.

And they'll begin to ask this, Where is your Beloved? Who is this One who has turned your heart so? I want to know Him. Now, here's the most important part of everything that's been said. My Beloved has gone to His garden, to the bed of balsam, to pastures, flock in the gardens, and gather lilies.

Now look, I want you to just look for a moment. Here's the great King. He has taken in this little shepherdess, this little girl.

A nobody, a nothing. And He's granted her His love. He's showered upon her His royalty and His blessing.

And then one night, He comes to visit her and she spurns Him. What would most kings do? Have her killed? What would most men do? Well, you just don't know what you're messing with, darling. Who do you think you are? I can find 10,000 girls better than you.

I'm sick and tired of this. You don't turn your back on Me. I'll show you what it's like to lose.

And on and on and on. But when this great King comes to you, and you would rather watch football, this great King comes to you and wakes you up in the middle of the night. Or this great King just constantly is calling you to have a consistent time with Him every day.

When this great King is bidding for your fellowship and you say, No. He doesn't throw a temper tantrum. He doesn't threaten.

He doesn't say, Well, I'll show you who I am. You've had your chance. It's over.

She has spurned this King. Where can she find Him again? The very place she left Him. The garden.

And what's He doing? Steaming mad. As soon as she walks into that garden, He's going to tell her off like you cannot believe. No.

He's in the garden. He's waiting. And He's picking flowers for her so that when she does return, He hands them to her and begins once again to shower His love upon her.

I don't want you walking out of here saying, Well, that's right. I don't love God like I ought to. And He's right.

I don't have a time in the morning with the Lord. And that's right. I'm so busy and I just seem to care about so many other things.

And walk out here. And when you walk out, the devil begins to drive that into your head even more and more, causing a greater and a greater separation between you and God. I do not want that happening because that's a lie.

The fact is, yes, we have all not loved God as we ought to. The fact of the matter is, we have all spurned Him at times when He has called us. The fact of the matter is, no, none of us seek Him as we ought to.

The fact of the matter is, He's still waiting wherever we left Him. And the only thing He's doing is not... He's scheming, alright. He's scheming on how He's going to shower His love upon you once again when you return.

As this old preacher friend of mine used to say, Oh, folks, we got ourselves a God. We have ourselves a God. I don't care.

I don't care. Believer, I don't care how cold your heart has been. I don't care how much you've neglected Him.

I don't care because it doesn't matter. You go run to Him and He will embrace you. A broken and contrite spirit He will not despise.

You come to Him. You say, Lord, it's true. Help me.

But then don't just stay there and say, Help me. If you want to love Him more, you just need to know Him more because the more you know Him, the more you'll love Him. I know that's what your husband told you when you were first dating.

Honey, the more you know me, the more you'll love me. And you have found that out to be a great disappointment. But that will not be the case with Him.

He doeth all things well. All things well. Let's pray.

Father, I come before You and I ask You, Lord, to work in the hearts of Your people to help them. And Lord, help me. Lord, I don't want to pretend in front of anyone.

Lord, my relationship with You is sometimes so inconsistent. And Lord, so busy I am so many times. It's like, Lord, selling our birthright for porridge when we could be with You.

We've sold that privilege for all sorts of things from hobbies to ministry. Lord, help us to know You that we might be absolutely enthralled by You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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