

Men Marked by the Presence of God

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God's presence and power in our lives, and the dangers of legalism and the need for a living relationship with God.

Duration: 1:05:21

Topics: "Presence of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of communing with God as a present person rather than just calling out for Him to come. He uses the analogy of a woman who goes out into the world without the king and is treated without dignity. The preacher encourages the audience to recognize their privileged position as believers and to shut themselves off from worldly distractions. He then focuses on a passage from the Bible where a bride longs for the presence of her beloved, highlighting the need for a passionate and intimate relationship with God.

Transcript

Anything it takes, you have to literally be before the Lord. Lord, anything it takes, anything it takes, anything it takes to bring me down from those high places. There have been times when I have stood in the pulpit after very little prayer and preached with great power.

There have been other times when I have given myself the long times of prayer and then stood in the pulpit and preached like a babe with bricks coming out of my mouth. No power. Walked down from the pulpit absolutely humiliated.

And I bless the Lord for those times. I bless the Lord for everything that He has worked in my life to show me that apart from His power, apart from His grace, apart from His mercy, I'm a goner. And to be afraid, why can't I watch that television? Do I not have a television? In that sense, because I'm more spiritual than you.

No, it's because I am more afraid. I know what that thing will do to me. It will grab me.

I am not strong enough. I'm not as strong as you. I'm not as powerful as you.

I can't look at even one little bit of that thing because if I do, it will grab me and suck me in. It is being afraid. As I've told you, I'm an outdoorsman and I love the outdoors.

And my little boy, he loves the outdoors. And he'll get wandering out there in the backwoods with me and he'll stray farther and farther. I tell him, come back, come back.

He'll stray farther and then I'll just let him go. I'll hide behind trees. I'll keep track of him.

I'll make sure that a coyote can't get him. But sooner or later, he begins to realize he's alone. And he calls out to Dad and Dad does not answer.

And he gets very, very afraid. And you say, you're a cruel father. No, I'm a good father.

I'm teaching him something. I'm teaching him what the Lord has often taught me in nights of silence. Oh, we run so bold.

And then we run a little bit farther and a little bit farther because we're always thinking we can run back. But you don't realize there is one like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And he is not afraid of the sheep.

He's afraid of the shepherd. And you had better cling to that shepherd. I can recall how many times my boy when I would finally appear behind the tree would run up and grab me by the leg and just hold on to my pants leg.

You couldn't have pried him off with a crowbar. That's the way I want to walk with the Lord because that's the only safe place. That is the only safe place.

Come down. You see, every time you think I can do this, every time you stray away, you've gone to high places, you've become proud, you've become independent, and you're walking in a dangerous place. Do you want the power of God? More importantly, do you want the presence of God in your life? Well, then you have to come down.

How dependent are you upon God? Talk to me about your prayer life and I'll be able to tell you how dependent you are upon God. Now, there's something very important here. Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse.

With me from Lebanon. Look down from the top of Amman and from the top of Sinai and Hermon, from the lion's den and from the mountains of the leopards. If we just think of this call as separating from the world, we're going to be in trouble.

It is not that he's just saying, separate yourself from the dangerous places, but what he is saying is this, come with me. Come with me. It is easier to be a legalist than a lover of Christ.

It is much easier. Get all your principles and go to the seminars that tell you exactly what not to look at and everything else and what to wear and how to act and where to go and who to hang around with. Get all the stuff and get it right.

Boy, it's easy. It's even fun. It's interesting.

But if you stop there, you know what's going to happen? Let me tell you something. Romans 7 is a frightening book. It's a frightening chapter.

And I'll tell you why. You get all the biblical principles that you need from great teachers to be holy. And if that's all you have, you will become a two-fold son of hell.

Because I want you to know, law, principles and wisdom without the presence of God is legalism and legalism always ends in immorality and sensuality. You find legalistic people in any denomination, people given over to legalism, and when you get in among them, you will find the grossest sensuality and immorality behind closed doors that you could have ever imagined. And why is that? You put the law upon someone without the working of grace.

And it will encourage them to sin. It will lead them to sin. It really will.

You get all your principles, but you do not seek God. You have all this understanding about what it means to be holy, but you do not seek the presence of God. God will leave you there with your principles and allow you to see just what you can do with them by yourself.

It is seeking Him. It is seeking Him. Now, something else.

Why are we so given to sensuality? Fallenness? Why are men so given to pornography? Fallenness? Well, not just fallenness, but actually it's a good thing gone wrong. You see, and I don't know how to explain this. We were created, and especially re-created, to behold the glory of God.

We were created with these hearts and re-created with these hearts to behold the glory of God. Infinite beauty. The infinite awesomeness of God.

And such beauty that it would throw us in such ecstasy that unless we were strengthened, we'd be destroyed by our own joy. When you're not getting that from God, you're going to seek to get it somewhere. They tell me that when a man looks at pornography, there are chemicals released in his body more powerful than any type of illegal drug he could even think about getting on.

That rush, that feeling of ecstasy, that feeling of otherness, that feeling of awesomeness, all these things that ought to be met in God, but when you've got a bunch of dead preachers preaching a dead gospel and not telling people because they themselves do not know that you actually can enter into the presence of God here on earth, and you can sense His wonder, and you can sense His joy, and you can sense His power, when all that's left to church is a sound doctrinal sermon, people are going to look for what they desire someplace else. They're going to take godly desires and twist them around. They really are.

You know, it is such a shame. I don't know if everyone here is Baptist. I'm Baptist, or Baptistic, or whatever you want to call me.

Baptist theology, I'm a Baptist because of our historical theology, not so much our theology in contemporary times. But much, some, Baptist theology is reactionary. And what I mean by that is this, it's not so much biblical as it is a reaction against the heresies that we see all around us.

For example, there is a doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. But because of all the wild heresies of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, sometimes you and I are afraid. You know, if a Jehovah Witness or a Jehovah-less Witness comes to my door, and they say, we're Jehovah Witnesses.

I say, well, come on in. So am I. I'm not going to let them steal that name from me. I'm the Jehovah Witness.

They're a liar. Charismatic? Yes, I am. As a matter of fact, if you're not charismatic, you're lost.

Because charismatic just means gifted. Now, I don't have anything to do with what's called charismatic today, but I'm not going to let them steal that word from me. Another thing I want you to know, this God of ours, I spend hours a day studying doctrine.

I teach doctrine. I love doctrine. But I want you to know something, doctrine is not an end.

It is a means. It is a means to knowing God. It is a means to knowing God.

Now, I'm going to share with you something I've never shared in a conference. It's a personal testimony. And it might cause many of you to be very disappointed in me and not even hear anything I have to say.

So be it. I preach in a lot of places once. As a young man in the ministry, I was privileged of being around a lot of very, very old and very, very godly men.

And they would talk to me. Now, these were men of God. Baptists.

Very staunch. Reformed, some of them. People not given to enthusiasm or emotions or any other thing like that.

Sound men. But they would talk to me about the power of God. They would talk to me about the presence of God.

Not as men quoting stories that they had read, but men who themselves had seen with their own eyes the working of God. And I would go out on the streets in Austin, Texas and preach. I was afraid.

There was no boldness. There was no power. There was nothing.

But I would always hear the voices of these old men. And one day I decided, enough is enough. I will seek Him until I find Him or until I die.

I went into a closet and I said, I'll not leave this closet until I know God. Fifteen minutes later, I fell asleep. My roommates came home and found me in the closet.

So I took an alarm clock with me. And please, I'm not saying this for any other reason except I feel like I'm supposed to. Took an alarm clock with me.

Set it for every fifteen minutes. I'd pray for maybe five or ten minutes. Fall asleep.

Alarm clock go off. Set it again. This was my prayer.

I didn't pray for China. I didn't pray for the presence of God. In the sense of my ministry, I asked one thing.

Lord, You said if I seek You, I'll find You. You said it, Lord, that You would reveal Yourself to me. You would let Yourself be found by me if I seek You.

Night after night after night after night for months. Two and three hours a night simply sitting there like this on my knees. Lord, it's been four months now.

It's been five days now. And You still have not come and just sit there. Lord, I've been here three hours and You have not come.

Day after day and night after night. And then one day, our church was spring break and all the college students were going to go on a Bible study ski trip type thing in Colorado. And I felt like the Lord wanted me just to go out into west Texas to the hill country.

Pretty barren. And I walked on top of those hills for three days like a wild man. If You would have seen me, You would have thrown me in an asylum.

I was picking up rocks and I was throwing them, literally, physically, throwing them at the sky. I was screaming. I was saying, God, I must know You.

You must come. You must. I can't live like this anymore.

I can't live just reading books. I can't live just reading about revivals and about people who knew somebody who knew somebody who knew somebody who knew You. And nothing happened.

And I went home. And another several weeks passed. And one night, He came.

He came. I just said, Oh, Father, I can't. Please come.

And He came. I was thrown down on the ground. I don't know how long in a fetal position covering my head thinking God's come to kill me.

The presence of God in a way that in one second more of my sin and my need and His glory and power was revealed. And then all of a sudden every bit of fear was taken away. And I was filled with such joy.

And my mouth shot open. Now don't be afraid. Verse after verse from Psalms and from everywhere else passages I had read just started coming forth.

Praises unto Him, the Word of God. Such joy. And I can tell you it has been 20 years.

And the presence of Christ is more real to me in this room than any one of you. And one of the things that is so bad today is many of you men here you also have known the presence of Christ. But now most of your prayer life is nothing but praying just a little and then just realizing He hasn't come and getting up and walking away instead of staying there until He does.

It's just prayer of going through the motions. You want holiness in your life? Run to Him. And stay there.

Stay there. My little boy whenever I'm putting my shoes on and he realizes my bags are packed he goes, Daddy stay with Ian. Daddy stay with Ian.

Or Ian go with Daddy. I find myself even this morning in prayer going, Father stay with Paul. Father stay with Paul.

Or Paul go with Father. I see so many boys today in the pulpit. They're boys.

Because as those old men told me the mark of a man of God is God upon the man. And I don't want to sound I don't want to sound arrogant. I don't want to sound anything else.

I just want to say this. That we have the desperate need to be men marked by the presence of God. We have the desperate need.

Now there are those extremes you know. You have these men who don't care anything about doctrine and they're just all Holy Spirit. Well they have nothing to say.

But I want you to also know that just doctrinal teaching about the presence and power of God brings death many times. And he says come down. But not only does he say come down.

He says come with me. Come with me. Come with me.

I don't like and I don't teach quiet times. The idea of you should have a quiet time. I know that's a big part of discipleship.

I don't agree with it and I don't like it. I don't see the Puritans having quiet times. A quiet time.

Is it like me going home putting my wife in a closet and 30 minutes a day I pull her out and talk to her and then stick her back in there? Well I've went through my checklist now of a good husband therefore now go back in the closet and here I go again. Our entire life, every moment of our life should be one of being with the Master. It is very hard to call up pornography sites on the computer when Jesus Christ is there.

It's very hard. And you need to realize we as... those of us who are Baptists we need to realize we have been so influenced by Popish Roman Catholic ideas of piety. It's unbelievable.

There is no such thing in the New Covenant of secular and sacred. It is all sacred. Even the pots and pans are sacred.

Everything is sacred. Someone asked me one time, you want to go to the Holy Land? I said everywhere I bow my knee is the Holy Land. Everywhere Christ is, is holy.

And it's not just learning things about holiness and learning things about principles. But it's also coming down and just walking with Him. Walking with Him.

I remember after I was born again and the love of God had been shed abroad in my heart. You know there's that time that you seem to walk with God when everything is God. Everywhere you look you just can't even stop thinking about Him.

And I remember several, well probably two or three months went by and it was just like that after my conversion. I mean just everywhere. All's I could think about was Jesus.

And then I remember one day walking into a store thinking about buying some new boots. And I walked out of the store. I have never been so broken in all my life.

I realized that I walked into that store and Christ was not in every thought. Christ was not in just... And I thought, what happened? Do you know what's terrifying? Is when that becomes so common it no longer even bothers us anymore. That's when unholiness and immorality and such things can creep in.

When Christ is not real. Christ is not real. I didn't even want to come out of the prayer thing.

Just wanted to stay there. Why? That's what we need. You men, most of you know more than I'll ever know.

The thing about it is are we seeking Him? Are we seeking Him? Are we seeking Him? Do we pray and nothing happens and we get up and we realize, well, we've been obedient. We've prayed. We're two or

three gathered.

He's here. I need more than that promise. I want His presence.

I want His presence and His power. Now, I did not mean to tarry that long on that verse. I want to go on to some other things.

Look at verse 7 prior to verse 8. When He first addresses her, He tells her to come down from those things which can hurt her. And before He says, come and follow Me, this is what He says about her. Thou art all fair, my love.

There is no spot in thee. Many times you come to see that you're walking in a place you shouldn't be walking or living in a way you shouldn't be living. And immediately, condemnation comes upon you.

And that condemnation drives you farther away from Christ. You feel ashamed. You feel like it's a works idea of well, I've got to get my life fixed, do this and everything and then kind of earn some brownie points and then come back.

And we have so much old covenant teaching. And do not realize about the new covenant some things that are so beautiful. Christ really did pay it all.

He really did pay it all. And when you come to the realization the Holy Spirit has convicted you in your heart that you're wrong, you should not be listening then to the devil who begins condemnation and everything else and tries to drive you further and further away from the Savior. When the Lord tells you you're wrong, He says also, He says it like this, He goes, you're wrong.

I love you. Come back. You're wrong.

You are without spot before me. Come back. I love you.

We have this idea that well, we need to be very, very careful when we start telling Christians that when they sin, their fellowship is broken with God. You need to be very careful about what you're saying. Cliches can be very dangerous.

Because according to 1 John, fellowship with God is synonymous with salvation. We claim we have fellowship with Him. That's talking about salvation.

You tell a believer their fellowship with God is broken, you're basically saying you're condemned and going to hell. What you need to realize, you have taught maybe your people and you believe yourself, you tell your people, if you sin, man, you're separated from God. Your sins have separated you and God.

Oh, really? You ever thought about what you're saying? You're separated from God, my friend, you're going to hell. If you're separated from God, you're condemned. Now, I'm not trying to play down sin.

What I'm just trying to tell you is we better clean up our language. Do you want to know what happens when a believer sins? God continues to love them. God continues to woo them.

God continues to come after them. God continues to draw them. Let me give you an example.

Let's say that God wants me to fast pray and read the Word all morning. But I want to go out to my woodshop and work. According to many fundamentalist pastors, this is what's going to happen.

God's going to stand there and say, well, you just go ahead and go to your workshop if you want, but I'm not going with you. And by the way, I hope you cut your fingers off. Do you know what really happens? I'll tell you what happens.

I go out to that workshop. God is screaming at me, I love you, Paul. I love you.

Nothing will change that. Come away with me. I'm looking for a board.

He goes over there with me and helps me find it. He said, Paul, here's the board. But I love you.

Come away with me. I turn on that power saw. He guards my fingers.

And when I look across that saw at the other side of it, he's standing there going, Paul, I love you. I love you. I love you.

Come back with me. Come back with me. You say, well, what about discipline? Oh, my dear friend, there is discipline.

There's church discipline. There's divine discipline. There's all sorts of discipline.

But it is always in love. And it is always with God screaming out to His children, And so when we talk about, well, we're here and we're in this mess we've got ourselves into, Satan will oftentimes intervene and say, now, God don't want anything to do with you. He's over with you.

He's finished with you. He cannot do anything with you. If you're a true believer and you have fallen into some sort of sin, condemnation from the devil will be constantly coming towards you, driving you further and further from the Christ, further and further from salvation.

And what you need to hear is, son, it is finished. I've paid the price for you. Your sins have been paid for.

One of my favorite passages in the entire Bible is that a bruised reed, he will not break. And a burning wick, he will not put out. What does that mean? It means this, my dear friend.

When you've fallen and you've sinned and you're in problems, you take a cane, for example. You go down to Israel and there the children would cut cane. There's just thousands and millions of cane growing everywhere.

And they would cut cane and they would make a flute out of it. But as they were making the flute with the cane, the flute would sometimes just break because cane is very fragile. Well, they wouldn't try to fix the flute.

They'd throw it away and get another piece of cane. There's all kinds of cane where that one came from. No sense working with that.

Just throw it away and start all over again. That's not the way God works. God selects a piece of cane, begins to work with it, play beautiful music from this thing, and then for the fractures and the failure in the cane itself, it breaks.

But God doesn't take that broken believer and throw him out and say, well, I can get someone else. I've got plenty where this guy came from. He'll take it and he'll mend it again and mend it again and mend it again.

How many times have I broken my own life and God has put it back together? That compels me to want to be holy. How many times have I fallen and He's put me back up? And then again you look and the burning wick. Have you ever been in a house where it's just lamps, no electricity? In Peru, in the jungle, that's what we had and we would have lamps.

And if that oil ever runs out of that lamp and that wick begins to burn, my dear friend, when that wick begins to consume, it will smell horribly. It begins to burn because there's no longer any oil. And it stinks and what you do is you just take the thing, open up the window and throw it outside.

It stunk up the whole house. A thing that was supposed to give light has done nothing but stink up everything. But when Christ begins to work with a believer and fills them with the oil of His Spirit and they grieve the Holy Spirit through sin and the wick begins to burn and the Christian begins to stink and it's nothing but the smell of burning flesh, Christ doesn't take that, throw it out the window and say, well, I can get another lamp.

But He begins again pruning and cleaning and preparing and then filling once again. So no matter where you're at in your life, there is this irresistible love of God that never gives up. And no matter how hard He has to speak to you and no matter how hard He may have to discipline you, it is always like the case with the prophets of Israel.

No matter how hard the rebuke, it always ended in hope. It always ended in encouragement. Now He says in verse 9, what is the motivation for being holy? The way God sees you in Christ.

The way God sees you in Christ. He says, Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes.

He's talking about when you look at me. Literally, my heart beats faster when you look at me. Now, do you think this is poetry? Do you think God writes this because He wants to hear Himself? Is this true? Does it really mean that every time, Paul Washer, every time I give a heavenly glance, every time I look towards my Father in Heaven, His heart beats faster? Do you see that? Does that not excite you? Does that not encourage you to pray? Does that not encourage you to keep your eyes on Him? That every time I look to the Father, His heart is ravished.

Every time, my little boy, when I get home, I just look and when he peeks around that door and looks at me, I am just on fire. Every time. You see, you think most of the time you go to God and He's like, just, well, I gotta listen to Him.

That's the covenant. I gotta stay here. Every time, my dear friend, I don't care who you are, if you're a believer, every time you turn your eyes upward in prayer, the Father's heart beats faster.

He is so full of divine joy. He is so full of divine fullness. He so awaits your glance.

It makes me want to just stop preaching right now and go pray. And then He says this. Look what He says.

He says, He says, With a necklace, literally. He says, when you look at me, fills me with joy. My heart beats faster in my passion for you.

And not only that, I see the beauty. I'm mesmerized by the beauty of that necklace you have on. And what would that be but grace.

What would that be? The very gifts, He says, the very gifts I gave you when I see them, they ravish my heart. Oh my dear friend, I don't know if you might just totally disagree with me on this, I don't know, but if you could only see what I'm saying here. When you bow your knee to prayer, when you bow your knee to pray, when you look up, when you're walking down the street, when you're in Walmart, wherever, and you give that upward glance, Father, it ravishes His heart.

It ravishes His heart. And when He looks down at you, He sees only that which He has given you. Grace upon grace and mercy upon mercy.

Don't you want to be holy? Don't you want to pray? If things are such as the Bible says, doesn't that change everything? And He goes on and He says, How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine, and the smell of thine ointment than all spices. Wine and spices represent the most beautiful, the most precious things that God has created. Beautiful things.

Of all the glory in the world, all the beauty, all the fragrances, all the flowers, all the mountains, all the sunsets, everything that He has made that is full of awesome beauty. But He says, Don, that your love towards Him is more beautiful than all those things put together to Him. He would rather see your love towards Him as pitiful as that love might be, as small as that love might be.

Your love toward Him is more beautiful to God than all the most spectacular and most beautiful things He has ever created. Doesn't that make you want to pray? Doesn't that make you want to be holy? Doesn't that encourage you? That your love is not just ascending up, being a pitiful thing sent back down to earth, rejected. And He goes on and He says this, He says in verse 11, Thy lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb.

Honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. The prayers of the saints. Do you realize, brother, I am so sorry that I'm such a pitiful messenger, but do you realize how precious your prayers are to Him? Compared to all the finest things in the world, compared to all the symphonies, compared to all the songs, compared to everything else, you crack your lips and speak a word to God.

And it is more precious to Him than everything else combined. Doesn't that make you want to pray? Doesn't that make you want to call on His name? Knowing that in Christ, it's received. And it is loved.

And it is appreciated. And He goes on and He says this, He says, A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. I use this verse all the time to teach college students about decency, about modesty.

But this applies to you, men. A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. We must be men who have shut the doors to many things.

Evil things, bad things, but even good things. We belong to Him. Oh, the Levites, the Levites didn't get the land and the territory and all these things.

Poor, poor Levites. But they got God. And you and I, among us as pastors and little itinerant preachers like myself and things.

No, we don't go out there and we can't work with our hands and we can't amass fortunes. And many times we spend our lives preaching in churches of 10 and 15 and 20 and 30 people. And yes, we've had to

sacrifice many things.

And yes, Isaiah 53 is basically a picture of our life if we're a good and godly pastor. And yes, so many things we have missed, but what have we been given? What have we been given? Poor, pitiful pastor? Oh my goodness. I would not trade.

I would not step down. I would not trade with the greatest kings and presidents of this world. We have been given the privilege to dwell in the courts of God.

To dwell in His courts, to be His ministers. How can we say anything but that we are the most privileged people on the face of the earth? And so, we must shut ourselves off from other things. Other things.

And live for Him. And live for Him. Now, he goes on and he says this.

He says, I'm going to go ahead and... time has gone by. I mean, I'm trying to find out where I want to go next. Let's just go ahead and jump to 16.

Verse 16. Now, bear with me. Please bear with me.

You know, brothers, honestly, I feel like I felt when I was preaching at the Baptist Seminary, Liberal Baptist Seminary in Bucharest. When I preached on a passion for Christ, the men just sat there like this. When I started talking about Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann, and Otto Weber, three theologians whose theology closed about every church in Germany, everyone sat up and went like this.

Do we want Christ? Verse 16. This is the bribe. Oh, I love this passage.

Awake, O north wind, and come thou south. Blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits.

Look at this. This young maiden, this spoused bee, she only has one desire. She has worked and worked and worked and worked to prepare a garden and only has one desire that the wind would blow through that garden and send the fragrance of it to her Lover.

That's all she wanted. That He would smell the fragrance of what she had done and that He would come and receive it. Do you remember when you were a new Christian? Do you remember when... I mean, you opened the Bible and you studied it.

You just wanted to be so pleasing. You wanted God to see. You wanted God to look down on what you were doing and just give that acknowledgement that He was pleased with you.

You would have done anything for His presence to come. You would have done anything for divine seal to be upon your life and upon your work. That's all you wanted.

You didn't care about your status in the denomination. You didn't care about what other people were doing. You didn't care about how big your church was or wasn't.

You didn't care about any of all that stuff, what people thought of you. The only thing you cared about was will He see this? Will He come? Will He be pleased with me? Your greatest desire when you were younger was just, Lord, that You'd be pleased with me. That's all I care about.

I remember the first job they gave me at a church after I was a Christian. I went to the elders and I said, you know, I'm a college student. I've been saved for a couple of months.

What do you want me to do? And they said, well, what do you know how to do? I said, well, I was raised on a farm all my life. They said, can you build a fence? I said, I've built thousands of fences. So they put me in there.

I thought they'd give me something to teach or something. They had me build a fence around the baseball field. That's the best fence anyone's ever built around a baseball field.

Why? Lord, look. Look at me. Lord, look.

It's me. Look what I'm doing. Not to get rewards.

Not to have crowns in heaven. Just when a little boy does everything. I'm amazed that when I go to the park and I'm there, I'm usually the only father with his child.

Usually it's mothers with the boys. And I go there and I'll start watching my boy and my boy will say, look, dad, look, look, look. And pretty soon, almost every boy in that park is around me.

They don't even know me. They're just going, look, sir. Look, look, look.

Because these little boys want a man to look at them and say, yes, good, go for it. Man, you're something. God has given us that so that we would learn a spiritual principle.

That's a good thing for us. Look, Lord. Never forget, sir, you're never going to be anything other than a child.

Look, Lord, it's me. Look what I did. But then you get old.

You get wise. You get mature. And a very special part of you dies inside.

And you begin to become a prey of things like worldly things that will excite. Worldly things that will move you. Why? Because this part of your life in Christ has died.

And yet your heart yearns for more than just principles and doctrines and standards and right ways of living. And then he goes on in verse 1 of chapter 5. I am coming to my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my mirth with my spice.

I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends, eat, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

This is the spouse. This is the king. Now look what's amazing here.

He says, I have come into my garden. This is so amazing. Why is it amazing? This is why.

He's a king. He has tens of thousands of people building him big gardens every day. Gardens that rank among the wonders of the world.

What does he need with a puny little garden of a little girl? If he was a pagan ruler, what would he do? What is this? Don't bother yourself with this, dear. I've got other men that can build tremendous gardens

and break her heart in two. Isn't that what he does? He says, I've come into my garden.

Those were the happiest words she ever heard. And I want you to know, you and I work in our little works in the corner of the world. Little men with little ministries.

No one will ever really know about us. And we're working and we're working and we're working. Some of you, 20, 30, 40, 50 years in the ministry working and preaching and everything else and building this little garden.

But you look outside your garden and you see all these men that seem to be building these great big hanging gardens and everything with thousands and tens and thousands of plants and fruit and everything else. And you're almost saying, what do I even have to give this King of Glory? What could I give Him that He would not despise? And yet, you say, here, Lord, here. And He says, well, thank you very much.

Thank you very, very much. One of the greatest burdens I have in my heart are for pastors who have labored for years and years and years preaching the truth and loving their people and have not compromised to Wall Street methodology to build Christ's church. And I know what a burden it must be for them because they see all around them little boys who know nothing of God supposedly being kings in the kingdom when they've spent their life praying and studying Scripture and communicating it to people and they're treated as a nobody.

Well, don't worry about being treated as a nobody on this earth because one day somebody's going to return and change absolutely everything. And on that day, I look forward to that day when I see godly men unknown to the world who have pastored faithfully and done faithfully and in the secret place been faithful when no one was looking when they stand before Him and say, Lord, here's my garden. And He said, oh, what a gift.

Now it is Mine. Everything you have done in My name, I receive. Now we go on.

And He says, verse 2, I sleep, but My heart awaketh. It is the voice of My Beloved that knocketh, saying, open to be My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled, for My head is filled with dew and My locks with the drops of the night. The Lover comes.

The Lover comes at an unexpected time to visit the bride. He comes at an unexpected time, not a planned time, not something she had programmed. He comes and He knocks on her door.

In the watch of the night when you would least expect it, He whispers, He knocks. Open to Me. Open to Me.

Verse 3, the bride answers, I've put off my coat. How shall I put it on again? I've washed my feet. How shall I defile them? There was a time when that little girl probably walked around the marketplace a thousand times a day for no reason at all, just hoping she would bump into the king.

She would do anything to get his attention. We can see that in verse 1. She'd do anything to be parley with him. She would do anything to be in his presence.

She'd make up excuses to leave the house, to wander around the town just hoping to bump into this guy. And when she did, her heart just beat in such a way that you would think it would come from her breast. But what happens when you enter into a relationship for an extended period of time? Things become

common.

Things become common. They become vulgar. It's just like some of you might even know him.

An old missionary by the name of Homer Crane. Baptist faith missionary. We called him the John Wayne of South America.

He was the biggest, toughest, meanest guy, but one of the best missionaries I've ever known in my life. And I remember the first time we went across the Andes Mountains. Old Homer was there just snoring as we went across the Andes in that train.

And I was looking all around going, how can this man be so dull in his heart to not see the beauty of all of this? A few years ago, I took a bunch of university people across the Andes Mountains and while they were looking around, I was snoring. And why is that? Commonality. Commonality.

Been there, done that, got the t-shirt. When you first met your wife, you had no struggles with passion, did you? Except against passion. You didn't have to build a fire.

You didn't have to kind of muster up the strength to be crazy about her. Every time she walked by, your heart beat so fast you thought she was going to have a heart attack. Those first years with the Lord, you'd have done anything for His presence and His power and His life and His approval to be upon your life.

You'd run anywhere. Pray. Pray even when He didn't call you to pray.

Read the Word. Do whatever. Just, I want to know Him.

I want to be with Him. I want to share His presence and His life. But now, you come home.

I mention television again because it's the greatest enemy of the pastor. Because the pastor has so many problems to deal with, the one thing he wants to do as soon as he gets out of church is to shut it all off. And the best way is to tune out by tuning in to the television set.

And maybe you're sensing in your heart, you know, one night, God's saying, come away with Me. You're tired, but this thing cannot give you strength. I can.

You're joyless because of what the people have done. This thing cannot give you joy. I can.

You need life. You need encouragement. You need the balm of Gilead.

Come away with Me. And you go, Lord, I've already done that. I've already done Your stuff.

Okay, I need to do my stuff now. I just need to rest. As though He were an employer and not the fountain of life.

Who was it telling me? I don't know, Bro. Don, I don't know who it was that said that a minister came to preach at a church to preach a revival at a church and the pastors and staff had already planned a golfing thing. Was it you, Brother? Was it someone else? Had already planned that that first day that the evangelist got there, they'd go out and do a little golf.

I mean, I don't golf, but I don't really have a problem with that necessarily. But the evangelist said he began to, you know, as he was golfing, he began to start talking about Jesus. And the pastor looked at

him and said, Brother, we're out here playing golf.

Let's not talk shop now. Ministers, you're in real danger of Jesus Christ becoming nothing but shop talk. Shop talk.

Shop talk. And when He comes to you and He knocks on the door at that unexpected time, you need to go and you need to go quickly. You need to respond quickly.

The moment He knocks on that door, come. And then it says in verse 4, My beloved put His hand to the door by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him. I rose up to open to My beloved, and my hands dropped with mirth, and my fingers with sweet-smelling mirth upon the handles of the lock.

I opened to My beloved, but My beloved had withdrawn Himself and was gone. My soul failed when He spake. I sought Him, but I could not find Him.

I called Him, but He gave me no answer. She opened the door. But you need to realize something, love does not tarry long.

There's a reason why the symbol of the Holy Spirit is a dove. It is gentle. It can be wounded.

Christ comes and whispers to you at times, Come away with Me. Come away with Me. And you almost pretend not to hear so as not to feel guilty.

And then you realize you're walking in your life without the presence of God. And what do you do? You finally spring up and you go to the door. Now, when He touched the door handle, some scholars of ancient Middle East culture say that what He did was He had a little pouch of mirth and other herbs and senses.

He pulled those out and He rubbed them all over the latch of the door handle. It was kind of like a calling card. When someone came to the door and the person they were seeking was not there, that when the person came home, they would smell the scent and know that that person had been there.

Most of the time in our prayer, we spend our time not fellowshiping with a person, but seeking a person that seems to have withdrawn himself. We catch a small fragrance of what we used to know. I remember when my wife, one time because of my work in the jungle, and this was not necessarily biblical, praise God He kept us, but I was actually about 82 days separated from my wife while I was in the jungle.

And I remember coming back to the apartment. She wasn't there. Finally.

And I remember going into her closet and pulling out her favorite sweater and sitting there on the bed and holding that sweater up to my nose and just smelling her perfume, smelling her. But it wasn't her. When we are not quick to jump to the Master's call, when we are not quick to follow Him, when He bids us with love to come away from Him, many of the times when we do get up finally, there's nothing there but a fragrance of the former person.

Brothers, let me ask you a question. How many times in prayer meetings and in personal prayer do you start off seeking the Lord? Maybe even it becomes a little zealous saying, Lord, Your presence. Just show up, Lord.

Break our hearts. Do something. But after the time is up, you just go ahead and go.

Why? Well, He didn't show up. Well, He didn't show up last time either. And instead of communing with the Lord Jesus Christ, we spend most of our time just calling out to Him.

Most of our time is just spent calling out for Him to come. And almost no time at all communing with Him as a present person. I'm going to finish.

I know I've gone long, but I want to read. She goes after Him in verse 7. The watchmen that went about the city found me. They smote me.

They wounded me. The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. When she went out after Him into the world without Him, how did the world treat her? What happened to her? She was treated as a woman not very chaste.

She was treated without dignity. So many things happened to her. Now, if the king had been beside her, do you think a man would not even have looked at her? They would have had such fear.

If the presence of the king had been there, she could have walked anywhere in that city, and a man, every time she came near, would have put his head down. Remember what Moses said? Lord, we'll not go if You don't go with us. We're afraid to go if You don't go with us.

My dear friend, pastor, you need to be afraid to go anywhere without Him. Because He's the only Savior you'll ever have. He's the only protector you'll ever have.

Nothing can protect you but Him. Because apart from His grace and His power, all those principles and all the doctrine you know will not avail you. You can't learn enough to be safe from sin.

The only thing that can keep you safe from sin is not a thing, it's a person, it's the Lord Jesus Christ. And they beat her. And then she finds some daughters of Jerusalem.

In verse 8 she says, I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love. She says, go look for him. She tells all these other women, go look for my beloved.

Go look for him. I've lost him. And this is what they say, What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved that thou dost so charge us? It's something like this.

She goes, look, I've lost my beloved. Please, go look for him. Go look for him.

And they say, why? I mean, he can't be all that. And he came to your door and you wouldn't even get out of bed. So why should we go running around everywhere looking for him? You didn't have to look for him.

And when he came, you didn't necessarily care. He can't be any different than anybody else. How many times do we stand up and tell people, look to Christ, seek Christ, and they look at us and go, why? I mean, how much do you seek Him? I mean, He can't be all that.

I mean, He's hired you to tell everybody how wonderful He is and you're not even that excited about Him. I mean, why should I be? It's not a joke, it's a reality. I'll never forget W.A. Criswell.

I saw him one time and he was preaching a typical First Southern Baptist Church sermon. That old man. And he was in Colossians, I believe.

That book talks quite a bit about Jesus. And all of a sudden, something happened to that old man. He was preaching very dignified, very Southern Baptist, very this, very that.

And all of a sudden, he read something about Jesus. And the old man, he backed up like this and he slapped down his hands like this and he goes, oh, folks, let me tell you about Jesus. And for about the next ten minutes, that man went wild.

Tears running down his face. I mean, he was everywhere at one time. That right there did more.

It actually, I'll tell you, it offended some people. He lost his dignity. Oh, no.

He was crowned with royal dignity when he went wild. We're telling people, you need Jesus. And they're looking at us saying, now, I'm kind of confused.

Jesus, is that a principle? What is that exactly? No, he's a person. Well, can he be all that, Pastor? I mean, honestly, I mean, I really don't see that much excitement in you. I have sat with big pastors of big churches and it is scary.

I'll start talking about evangelism or church growth or something and they will be so excited. It's unbelievable. And I'll start talking about the loveliness and beauty of Christ and they look over my shoulder.

That's scary. That's frightening. Pastors that will travel everywhere on this continent to hear a new method about how to make their church big.

But you give a seminar on godliness or a conference on just the cross of Jesus Christ and see how few come. Now, it goes on in verse 10. My beloved, this shocks her, this question.

And she begins to rethink. She begins to think back on who this is that His Savior says, My beloved is white and ruddy and chiefest among 10,000. His head is as the most fine gold.

His locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are the eyes of doves by the rivers of water washed with milk and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers.

His lips like lilies dropping sweet, smelling mirth. His hands are gold rings set with beryl. His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

His legs are as pillar of marble set upon sockets of fine gold. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet.

Yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. What happens? She begins to think about Him.

No more about ministry. No more just about church. No more about us, about our progress in the faith or anything else.

Just about Him. Some men will never grow because they're so introspective. Because that's all they think about is them, their walk, their own failure.

That's why I told that young man. I said, young man, you're probably more spiritual than I am, but I'm happier than you. You have your eyes on your works.

I have my eyes on the finished work of Christ. When you start, going back to what I preached yesterday, you start getting into the attributes of God, studying the attributes of God, on your knees, crying out to Him and begin to see the beauty of God, the specialness of God, the uniqueness of God, everything about Him. Your heart can't help when you come to know Him, to love Him and to transmit that love.

To transmit that love. I'll never forget, I was doing a Reform Conference in Detroit, Michigan. And we went out to eat somewhere.

Some kind of, I don't know, Cheetos or some kind of place like that. And they had all these waiters. They were all college boy waiters.

Earrings in their ears and little flippy hair and everything else, the way they dress and such. And I was sitting there with all these theologians. And one of them had a Bible open even.

And this kid comes walking in there to, you know, bleached blonde hair, earrings, everything else. He comes in and he says, can I take your order? Dude! He looked at the older theologian. Dude, you got a Bible! And I said that pretty good, didn't I? And the guy goes, well, yes, I do.

He goes, man, that's great. He goes, because I was seeking Jesus and seeking Jesus, I was seeking God, I was seeking something, and I found Jesus. And Jesus changed my life.

And I could see all those theologians. They were sitting there going, yeah, right. Immediately they were saying in their mind, no, young man, you didn't seek Him.

No man seeks God. God seeks men. Theologically, you're wrong.

You can't be saved. And I mean, this kid is just, he didn't even want to do the food anymore. All he's talking about is Jesus.

And I mean, most of the things he's saying is wrong. But you could tell. I mean, God had gotten hold of this boy.

I talked to him for a while and everything and then he left. And I looked at all the men and I said, you know, it's a lot better to have it and not know what to call it than to know what to call it and not have it. And I said, you know, that's the work of a theologian, isn't it? To explain the work of God.

Not to produce it, but to explain it. That boy was wild. He did more good than those four or five stuffy theologians sitting around that table.

And yeah, the Lord's probably going to change him all over. Give him time. I've been working 40 years with you and I don't see much progress, so don't be hard on the boy.

And then finally, when she says that, in verse 1 of chapter 6, the girls ask, whether is Thy beloved gone, O Thou fairest among women? Whether is Thy beloved turned aside that we may seek Him with Thee? Oh, look at the difference. Oh man, that one, he must be something. If he is like this, if you're so excited about him, if you would die a thousand deaths just to see one glance of his eye, he must be something.

If you talk about him so, he must be something. He must be something. Now, conclude right here.

They say, where is he? And she comes to the full realization of something. My beloved has gone down into his garden to the beds of spices to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies. My dear friend, when your heart grows dull and you begin to replace the presence and person of Christ with different things, and that is idolatry, and you feel horrible about it, and you feel like, how can I even approach Him with such a dull heart? How can I even approach Him having lived so long not concerned about the things that were a reality in my life when I was younger? How can I approach Him? Well, just look at this.

This girl in this book had scorned the love of a king. She considered it as boring to get out of bed to answer the door when he came to her in the middle of the night. Any other king would have been screaming mad.

He would have said, I came to your door. You were nothing when I found you. I made you my own and then you treat me like that leaving me outside the door? And then you run around the city like a tramp? And then now you expect me to take you back? But when she comes back to the one that she so offended, where does she find Him? She finds Him standing there at the door with a bouquet of flowers.

He's picking lilies to give them to the one who has offended His love. You know why we can't understand that? Because there's just no love like that in this world. There is no other example of the love of God except God Himself.

It is so hard for us to fathom I talk to my Pentecostal friends sometimes and they all say that the greatest demonstration of faith is being able to raise the dead. You raise the dead in a Pentecostal church, you are your upper epsilon. They were saying that one day and I looked at them and I said, raise the dead? I said, raise the dead? That's nothing for a Baptist.

Raise the dead? That doesn't require faith. And they said, well what requires? I mean, what do you guys consider the greatest exercise of faith? I said, for me to look in the mirror of God's Word, see the dullness of my heart and the many times that I have offended the King of Glory, and then to actually believe that He loves me like He says He does. Doesn't that make you want to be holy? Doesn't that make you want to pray? I wish a better man and a better speaker had taken this text.

Father, O Lord, O Lord, Your love, Lord, is so immeasurable, so infinite, O God, and my heart, Lord, as the song says, prone to wander, O Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above. O God, I pray that the love of God would be shed abroad in a new way, Lord, in the hearts of Your men, and that that love, that presence, that person of Yours, would keep us from evil and make things like the wickedness, the vileness, the pornography of this world seem dull and boring because of the grandeur and the awesomeness and the beauty of You.

O God, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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