

# (Missions Conference Shoals) - Part 6

by Paul Washer

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*Paul Washer emphasizes the importance of returning to biblical truths and understanding God's grace and mercy in the life of believers.*

**Duration:** 1:22:04

**Topics:** "God's Love"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being attentive and responsive to God's call. He shares a story about a girl who eagerly waits for a man in the market, illustrating the kind of anticipation and longing we should have for God. The preacher also highlights the need for fellowship with God and how He graciously reaches out to us to arouse our hearts. He encourages listeners to recognize the gifts and blessings God gives us as opportunities to draw closer to Him. The sermon concludes with a reminder that true church is not just about preaching, but about transformed lives and love for Jesus and others.

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## Transcript

Open up our Bibles to the Song of Solomon, chapter 4. As you know, we've extended these meetings. God has been very, very gracious to us. And tomorrow night we'll not be having meetings, but Sunday, and we will again, Sunday and Sunday night.

I know that many of you who are visiting will probably, and should, go back to your churches, support your pastors. But I just want to thank you. It's been a great privilege for me to be here.

It scares me a bit. I feel something like John Wesley. He was riding on his horse one day, and going from one preaching spot to another, and he realized that in the last few weeks, people had been unusually kind to him.

So he got down off the horse, and he got down on his knees, and he asked God to forgive him, because he said, I must be compromising in my preaching. I must be carnal in some way, to have so much affection for men placed upon me. And while he was praying, a farmer who hated him, saw him and threw a brick at him, and it missed his head by a few inches.

And he said, thank you, Lord, for that confirmation of my ministry. But at the same time, I know that the leadership, not only the pastor, but the leadership in this church, and many of you have gone through many of the same things that I have gone through. So I was telling a sister this morning, I said, do you

remember the message that I preached on the cross of Jesus Christ? And she said, oh yes, Brother Paul.

I said, I preached that in a Southern Baptist church a few years ago, the first morning that the revival was to begin, or the first evening that the revival was to begin. And the next morning, the leadership came to me and asked me to leave. Because I had said that the wrath of God abided upon men, and Jesus Christ, when he was on the cross, bore our guilt and our shame, and the wrath of God crushed him in our place.

And because of that, the meetings were canceled. So I want you to realize that I appreciate, I want to be quick not to flatter men, but I appreciate what God is doing here. I appreciate it in a great and tremendous way.

And I only hope that God will grant you the courage, the courage to continue. The reformers coined a phrase in Latin, *semper reformanda*, always reforming, always reforming. And there is such a need in the Southern Baptist convention, not to move on to new ideals, not to move on to new fads and new theories, but to turn back from the rock from which we were cut, and embrace the old way, the biblical way.

We don't need anything new. We need to go back to what is old. Now, before I enter into this message, I need to explain again that we have throughout this week preached against the idea of a continuously carnal Christian, that there is no such thing, that assurance does not come from praying a prayer, and assurance does not come from writing your name in the back of your Bible and putting the date there.

Assurance comes from a continuing work of the grace of God in a person's life, a work that will be evident. And if there is no fruit in your life, and if there is no discipline or correction, and you can live in ungodliness, that, my friend, is the evidence of a lack of regeneration. You are not a Christian.

And so we've preached hard on that this week. But then we came to last night, and it seemed as though we almost contradicted ourselves. But then again, if you read Romans chapter 6, you'll find the same thing in the Apostle Paul.

Because of his view of grace and his declaring grace to the people of God, the true people of God, some people were saying, well, let us sin that grace may abound. And that was not what Paul was teaching. Last night, I was done with preaching to carnal lost church members and began to preach to the people of God.

And the people of God need to know that God has done a work. And that work is finished. And by virtue of the death of the Son of God, they are pardoned of all their sin and all their iniquity and all their trespasses against the Lord of glory.

By virtue of the perfect life He lived, He has not only forgiven you, but He has granted you His righteousness so that you are the very righteousness of God in Christ. And it is for these very reasons that angels long to peer into the very things that have been given to you. The very things that have been given to you.

Now, before I go into the Song of Solomon, I just have to turn over to the book of Ephesians. So forgive me if my old preaching professor is here. Well, I'm out of school and you can't flunk me now.

Let's go to the book of Ephesians just quickly. I want to show you something. Something that is so dear to my heart and I must say it quickly because there's other things that must be said.

But have you ever wondered the reason behind everything God has ever done? Have you ever wondered the reason behind everything God has ever done? You know, people will say, well, why did He make the earth? Why did it fall? Why this? Why that? Why all these things? Well, the book of Ephesians tells us. And you're wrapped up in the answer. Or maybe even the answer is wrapped up in you.

Look in Ephesians chapter 2. In verses 4 through 6, he's talking about the work of God in Christ on behalf of God's people. And then he gives the reason for it in verse 7. So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace and His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. Why has He done everything that He's done? So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Now go to chapter 3 verse 10. Speaking about the church, the same thing in verse 10 of chapter 3. He says, So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. What is this all about? God is doing a demonstration.

Even liberal theologians will agree with me on this. God is a God of revelation. What does that mean? Not that He's the God simply of the book of Revelation, but the thing that God desires to do most within His creation is reveal Himself to His creation.

Not only unto men, but unto angels. See, you often think that angels know everything. Well, they don't.

Because angels are creatures and they're finite. And finite can never grasp an infinite God. So not only for us, not only for this earthly creation, but for all of heaven, God is revealing Himself and He has chosen to do His greatest work of revelation through you.

The greatest revelation God will ever give He has given through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ, and it has much to do with you to declare to all principalities and powers, mites, dominion, men, crickets, and clowns, to all of them, who He is. Now, I want you to think about something for a moment. God makes a ball of dirt.

That's basically what the earth is. He makes a rock, a ball of dirt. Something far beneath Him.

They tell me heaven is more splendid than this place in which we live. So why did He make a lesser place than heaven? And they tell me that angels are spectacular creatures. That if one were to walk in right now, we would probably all fall on the floor.

But you walked in and we didn't do that. So why did He make a ball of dirt? And why did He put little pieces of clay, living life on this planet? When He could have done something far much greater. Far greater.

Far greater. We have no idea the works of God in heaven. We have no idea the miraculous and the special and the unbelievable sorts of things He has done elsewhere.

And yet He has made us. And then we have a man who clenches his fist in the face of God and rebels. Now, what do you suppose the principalities and powers and mites and dominions thought on that day? Well, from what we know from Scripture, there had only been one other rebellion that anyone even knew about.

And that was Satan and his angels. And what happened on that day when they rebelled against God? Perfect justice happened on that day. You rebel against God, there is one thing you will know.

He is holy, He is just, He is sovereign, and He shares His throne with no one. And so with that disobedience of the creature, we see judgment. No mercy, no grace, pure judgment.

Isn't it amazing? The angels fell, and God never sent them a Savior. That ought to tell us something. He didn't have to send one to us either.

If God had saved no man, He would still be God. He owes nothing to man. A.W. Tozer said one time, he said, if everyone on the face of the earth were to go blind, it would not diminish the glory of the sun.

And if every man on the face of the earth were to turn their back on God and spend eternity in hell, it would not diminish the glory of God. But now you've got these principalities and powers and mites and dominions that are looking on to learn of the wisdom of God, the manifold wisdom of God. The only thing they knew was this, you disobey, judgment.

What do you expect they thought was going to happen when Adam clenched that dirty paw of his and shook it in the face of God? Judgment. But what happened? Mercy. Oh, here's a new thing.

Here is a new thing. Here is a splendid thing we have never seen before. Mercy and grace.

You say, no, Brother Paul, there was judgment. I mean, after all, there was the sentence of death, there was the suffering in the world, there was the pain in childbirth, there were all these things. Judgment, judgment, judgment.

No, judgment would have been the annihilation of the race. But we saw mercy. And know this, people.

Know this, every time you go out, sir, every time you go out and you go to that factory or you go to that job and you work by the sweat of your brow and you see around you what seems to be so much without meaning, you know what that is? You say, yes, it's the judgment of God. God said I would have to work that way by the sweat of my brow. Not only is it judgment, my dear friend, it's mercy.

It is mercy. God has brought that upon you because with that sweat on your brow and with that struggling in your life, He is screaming out to you, lost, lost, lost. Here I am.

Here I am. And woman in childbirth, every ounce of pain shooting through your body like a knife. You say, judgment, yes, but also mercy and grace and God's voice calling out to you, fallen, fallen, fallen.

There is a Savior. These principalities and powers and mites and dominions, my, how they learned something about God the day that Adam fell. Things they had never seen before.

And then, the incarnation of the Christ, the Son of God becomes a man and all of heaven stands in awe. All of heaven. Every splendid being speechless as the creator of the universe, the glory of glories takes upon himself human flesh and then goes to a cross and takes upon himself the sins of his people, the iniquities of his nation and he stands in their law place and all the judgment of almighty God falls down upon him and the principalities and mites and dominions say, what is this new thing? Who is this God? You see, if you've ever questioned the wisdom of God and the fall of the human race, although the fall was definitely the fault of the human race, the sovereignty of God was also there.

And if you've ever wondered what was the purpose of the fall, let me throw this out at you. If God truly is God and if God is worthy and if knowledge of God is the greatest gift, then no matter what the cost, it is worth it if God, all of God, might be known. You say, well, what are you getting at? In a world where everyone meets the conditions, you will never know anything about unconditional love.

In a world where everyone keeps the rules, God's mercy is hidden. And in a world where everyone deserves what they deserve, you know nothing of grace. This fallen world, though it be laid squarely at the feet of man and the blame placed upon man and man alone, there was a purpose in this fall of God revealing God.

You say, but what a high price! Not if it's God. What's worth more to you? That's what I ask Christians sometimes that are suffering. What's worth more to you? The knowledge of God or a tranquil life? And then there's you.

Oh, those angels know you better than you know you. Do you know why they know you better than you know you? Because they know God better than you. They know He is holy.

Oh, in such a way that the most powerful, most holy, most beautiful angels that have ever been created bow their knee, bow their faces in the presence of God and cannot look to Him. Look at Isaiah 6. In the year the king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple, and above Him stood the seraph, each one having six wings. With two He covered his feet, with two He covered His face, and with two He did fly.

And one cried unto the other, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory. They're the most powerful, the most splendid, the most beautiful, the most holy.

You say, how do you know that, Brother Paul? Because of their proximity to the throne. There's no creature closer to the throne than them. And yet they cannot look Him in the face.

And that is why when Adam fell, I'm sure there was a rattling of swords and spears and lances in heaven. The only thought that they should think there in glory is it's time for war. Let's go down and annihilate the whole lot of them.

And then they see you in your unconverted state. And I must anger them when they think of how conceited you are, not knowing the holiness of God, lifting your head so high in your disobedience, thinking you could stand up against omnipotence, not knowing, as they know, that you would melt before them like a tiny wax figurine in a blast furnace. And although they looked at you and said, judgment, judgment, judgment, one day, one day, through the preaching of the gospel, God declared, grace, grace, grace, and He saved you.

And on the day that He saved you, every principality and power and might and dominion in all of heaven itself fell down and worshiped God who could do such things. And then throughout all your life, He will be working. Throughout all your life, He will be working and working and working, giving ever greater measures of grace and placing it upon you, just like the servant who went to get a bride for Isaac.

Don't you suppose when he found the girl and began to bring her back, that with every step of the camel, probably her heart would doubt, who is this one I am going to meet? Will he really love me? And that servant, every time he saw that look on her face, pulled another jewel out of his pocket and said, this is from your Lord. This is from your Lord. And every time you have doubted, every time you have become

weary, God has given you extra measure and extra measure and extra measure of grace, and all of heaven looks on at the demonstration of God's goodness in you.

And then one day a trumpet sounds, a trumpet, a mighty blast. And there you stand before the Lord. You say, well, what will be my main thing in heaven? Do you really want to know? Let me show you what your purpose will be in glory.

In Ephesians chapter 2, verse 7, so that in the ages to come, so that in the ages to come, He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. As the pastor was sharing yesterday from Jonathan Edwards and from his own particular studies, I was sitting there going, I thought I thought of that. But now we know there are no days in heaven.

We do know that, don't we? But let's just say they are for the sake of learning something. You walk into heaven. You say, well, I know everything, Brother Paul, when I get there.

No, you'll know a lot, but you won't know everything. And that's what makes heaven, that's what keeps heaven from becoming boring. You will spend the rest of eternity marking out an infinite God.

And with every new dawn will bring greater measures of the knowledge of God and throw you into greater states of ecstasy and joy. But not only that, the first day you arrive, grace is lavished upon you. The kindness of God is lavished upon you.

You walk through the door and the kindness of God in front of all of creation is poured forth on you. And all of creation looks at what you were, what God has made you. And the kindness He is bestowing on you on that day, and they go, now we understand who God is.

And they fall down and they worship God because of His kindness to you. And then, day two. Day two, we all wake up.

You get up. And all of heaven once again turns its eyes toward you and waits. What will God do to this one today? And then God comes with a greater measure of kindness and a greater measure of grace and a greater measure of beauty and love and douses you with it.

He lavishes it upon you. And there they go again. All principalities and powers and mights and dominions fall down and worship God because of His goodness revealed to them through what He does to you.

That is why angels, the most spectacular, long to look at the things that have been ordained for you. Now, I wanted to say that before we got to the Song of Solomon. Let's go there now.

How then should we be? If your Christianity is marked by rule keeping and nothing more, then this has nothing to do with you. Or maybe it does. Maybe you will learn tonight that Christianity is much more than rule keeping.

I hope to take some of you back to what has horribly been called your honeymoon with Jesus. You know, someone gets saved and they're all excited and we say, well, that's just a honeymoon period. I remember the first time someone told me that.

I should have known at that moment I was going to have trouble with my mouth the rest of my Christian life. He said, well, this is just your honeymoon period. One day you'll be like us.

And I said, I hope God kills me before I'm like you. Verse 16 of chapter 4. Awake, O north wind. Now this is the girl speaking.

Awake, O north wind, and come, wind of the south. Make my garden breathe out fragrance. Let its spices be waft abroad.

May my beloved come into his garden and eat his choice fruits. This little girl, and I'll refer to her in that way, this is not a wealthy princess. This is not some woman of means.

This is a simple girl. And what is her greatest desire? Her greatest desire is to draw the king. Her greatest desire is for him to come.

Her greatest desire is when he is walking down the path that he will turn and look to her. Oh, she knows he's great. She knows he's something.

She knows all about him. But her one desire is that he will just stop and glance her way. Remember last night when I spoke about how God, His heart beats faster with every glance from your eye.

Well here, we see something very, very special. Here is the bride. Here is the church.

And her only desire is to catch his eye. Do you remember when you were a brand new Christian? Now some of you won't even know what I'm talking about and it could be evidence that you've never come to know him. But you remember when you were a brand new Christian and the only thing you wanted was to catch his eye? You would pray.

You would cry out to him. If anything of service or any opportunity came to do something in the name of Jesus, you would want to do it. No matter how great or how small, you just wanted to be involved.

And you hoped that with all the things that you did, you hoped that you would, you know, sense His pleasure on your life, that He would turn your way, that He would look at you. You didn't desire anything else. It just seemed that you were consumed with this one passion that He might look your way, that He might send a smile your way, that He might say, it is well, that He might just look at you.

I'm amazed. And fathers, this is a word for you. When I go to the playground with my little boy, usually I'm the only dad there.

The other boys are all there with their mom. And it's amazing. When I begin to play with my little boy, that all the other little boys that are there at the playground run over to me, because I'm a man, and they say, Sir, watch me.

I can do that too. Sir, watch me. Watch me, sir, because I can do that too.

The only thing they want because their dad's not giving it to them. And their dads will pay dearly. And so will the child.

The only thing they want is for me to look, swing off monkey bars, half kill themselves on the trapeze, whatever it takes, but just look my way, sir. That's all I want is that glance from you. I remember when I was a new Christian, and I hope you do too, when all I wanted, you know, was, you know, I'd pray, just, oh Lord, just a sense of your presence, and sometimes you'd feel his presence, and you'd just think that you were the most special person on the face of the earth.

That he had done something with you he didn't do with anybody ever. And then I would get in church, I remember my first activity, first ministry ever given to me in a church. I, you know, I thought, well, the preacher will ask me to teach or preach or something.

And he said, You're from a farm, aren't you? I said, yeah. He goes, You know how to build a fence? I said, yeah. He said, go out to the ballpark and build a fence.

And I can remember going out there and just building that fence. You know, the only thing was, you know, Jesus, look at my fence. I made this fence for you.

Look at me, Lord. I'm having my quiet time. It wasn't a thing of works.

It wasn't a thing of trying to earn. No, I just wanted him to see me. I just wanted him to look my way.

I just wanted that hand on the shoulder. I would have died a thousand deaths for that. Maybe that's the only ambition we should ever have.

This little girl stands there and she goes, Oh, come winds of the north and southeast and west, whichever, will find my beloved. Take this thing I have. I made this little garden.

Now take it and blow it towards him that he might know and that he might come and that he might take from me The only thing she wanted to do was give everything she had to him and she would be happy. Do you remember when you felt that? Oh, I hope you do. Do you remember those days? Now, here's the amazing thing.

Verse 1. I have come into my garden. This is the bridegroom. My sister, my bride.

I have gathered my myrth along with my balsam. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey. I have drunk my wine and my milk.

Now, here's something very interesting. In verse 16, it's her garden that she made. In verse 1, he claims it as his own.

He takes it. You say, well, what's so big about that? Don't you understand? This is the king. This king has thousands of gardens.

He has thousands, maybe tens of thousands of men doing nothing but working in the royal gardens and making them one of the great wonders of the world. What does he need with a puny little garden of some little girl? But you see, this king is different. Oh, this king is different.

There's none like this king. He's the one among ten thousand. He's different.

He takes it. He takes it. That's one of the most beautiful things in the world to me.

Maybe I'm not making myself clear, but it's one of the most beautiful things in the world to me. I'm never going to be big. I'm probably never going to do great things.

When I die, my name will die with me, just like millions and millions of other servants of God. I have nothing to offer someone like him. I have nothing worthy.

I just have a little garden. And there's all these other men out there that have these gardens that are just so much bigger than mine. What's somebody like me to do? I'll tell you what someone like me should do.

Take that little garden of mine and hand it over to him and he will claim it as his own. He will not despise it. I know of wealthy, strong, proud men who own everything.

And if some little peasant were to walk up to them and hand them a little crocheted napkin or something that they had made, they'd say, you know, what value does this have? But Jesus is not that way. Dear saint, everything that you offer to him out of a sincere heart, he will take it and call it his own. Oh, this is a feeble prayer.

How can I offer it to him? Everything I have is feeble. Why not offer it? He is a gracious master. Oh, this ministry of mine, it is such a tiny thing.

It is just so silly itinerant preacher running around the country. What am I to do? Give it to him and he will take it. You say, well, you know, I'm a janitor in the church, right? I cut the lawn here at the church.

I was out there today with the guy cutting the lawn. You've got the coolest tractor I have ever seen. You can spin that thing on a dime and I almost hit somebody's car in the parking lot.

Everything. Have you never read that even a cup of cold water given to a disciple because he is a disciple, you will not lose your reward? That I so encourage you. You know, so much of our lives are governed by fear.

The fear of man is a snare. But also our lives are governed by the fear of rejection. There is so much we don't do because we think what we do doesn't matter and that it will not be received.

But that is not the case with him. The smallest thing, he takes it and he calls it his home. You say, what's the Christian reward? That's it.

He took it. That is the reward. He took it.

He esteemed it. He took it. Now, he says in verse 1, Eat friends, drink, and imbibe deeply, O lovers.

Although this is a relationship between two people, an intimate relationship, it is amazing that when this intimate relationship is as it should be, when she is passionately, when the church is passionately in love with Christ, and Christ, of course, always passionately in love with his church. And when the one believer is passionately in love with Jesus, it just seems to overflow with joy to so many other people. So many other people are brought in.

You don't need hype in this church. You don't need entertainment in this church. You don't need to turn this church into a six flags over Jesus.

Fall in love with Jesus Christ, and that will flow out into other people. Passionately seek Him, and that will flow out into others. And it will bring others in.

What do you know about that church, great preacher? Oh, pray to God they never say that. Pray to God they say, Oh, there's such a passion. There's such a passionate love for Christ.

Such a passionate love for Him. And I went there, and I was just brought into, sucked up into the joy. You know, kind of like when you go to a wedding, and you don't even know if you're really supposed to be there, but there's so much joy, and there's so much life.

You just get caught up into it, and you forget you're not even related to anybody. It is that sort of thing. Basically, most churches in America are lawless.

They're without discipline. There's no church discipline. That's why there's just godliness, ungodliness runs rampant.

The name of God is blasphemed because of unconverted church members, and all sorts of things. And when I preach those things, people think of me as someone who will be, you know, very strict, and very this, and very that, and very proper, and very solemn. I'm completely the opposite.

I hope to be like my Lord, who at times spoke about God, and the wrath of God, and the holiness of God, and men were afraid to walk with Him. And yet at other times, speaking about other things, children ran to Him. There is a real sense in which this church needs to stand up as a lighthouse, and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and preach the attributes of God.

And if those things are not enough to draw a man, then nothing will do any good. But at the same time, when they walk in here, there should be an overwhelming sense of people who are in love with Jesus Christ. So many churches have, you know, you can go in, you can tell that this is a Bible church.

This is a Bible church. I preach in Bible churches. What are Bible churches? Man, they're scholars.

It's just the Word, the Word, the Word, the Word, and when you walk in church, everybody's just looking down at their Bible. And then there's the charismatics, and they're over there, you know, jumping through hoops and doing everything that they think they need to do in the name of the Holy Spirit. And then there's this evangelistic church, and this church, and that church.

What you need to be church is a church that preaches biblical messages from the Word of God, but people who do not hold preaching to be the end, but a transformed life of people who love Jesus Christ. And if you love Jesus Christ, you'll love everybody else. You'll love everybody else.

And other people will be brought in to your joy. Now, we go to verse 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 and my locks with the damp of the night. Now, first of all, here again is the lover, the man. And look at the way he sees her.

My darling, my dove, my perfect one. How does Christ see the church, the true church of Jesus Christ? Not the membership role, the church. How does he see the church? Exactly this way.

If you are a Christian, how does he see you? Exactly this way. In terms of endearment, in terms of love, in terms of purity, this is how he sees you because he has done a work on your behalf. And another thing that you need to realize, here he comes at the watch of the night, at the hour least expected.

At the hour least expected. Sometimes I'm preaching and I have great, great fear when I preach or when I go to a place. It's like Duncan Campbell preaching about the great Hebrides revival.

The first thing he says in the message is I want you to know that Duncan Campbell did not bring revival to the greater Hebrides. Revival doesn't ride on the back of a man. Revival comes as a sovereign work of God when Jesus Christ walks in the door.

And so many times we try to plan things and get people motivated in so many things but Jesus Christ doesn't walk in the door. And he usually walks in the door at the hour least expected. And an hour least convenient for the believer and for the church.

That's why sometimes I have trouble with the idea of quiet time. To me quiet time is like putting my wife in a closet and bringing her out 20 minutes a day to talk to her and then putting her back in the closet. Jesus, didn't you already have my quiet time? Jesus, we had the revival last week.

No, you had meetings last week. I wasn't there so it wasn't a revival. Are you constantly a lover watching, watching, watching this little girl? Man, when she first met this guy, if she even heard that he was going to be walking through the market, she'd say, Mom, I'm going to buy eggs.

She'd walk around that market a thousand times in the heat of the day just hoping to catch one glimpse of his eye. Lord, I'll turn that TV off. Would you come? Lord, I think I heard you call my name.

It's four in the morning. Did you call, Lord? Speak. Speak, Lord.

I'm waiting. I'm waiting. A true man or woman of prayer is someone who waits.

They hear no voice. They hear no sound. They do not speak much.

They wait. And they listen. But here we see something else.

Verse 3. I have taken off my dress. How can I put it on again? I have washed my feet. How can I dirty them again? Oh, my.

This is you. When you were a brand-new Christian, maybe felt the leadership of the Holy Spirit to read your Bible or to pray, to turn away from the world and things. It wasn't even hard.

I mean, you didn't have to have a mystical experience. It's what you wanted to do. You wanted to read your Bible.

You wanted to pray. You wanted to be around other believers and all sorts of things. And now your life is so filled with activity, maybe even church activity.

Your life is so filled with so many things, both religious and secular, worldly and carnal. And your life is filled with so many things. And Jesus stands at the door and knocks.

And by the way, if there's any evangelists here, stop using that verse out of context because it's a verse to the church, not to the unregenerate. You say, well, it's good, but that still doesn't give you the right to twist it out of its context. Behold, I stand at the door and I knock.

And there was a time if you would have heard Him knocking at your door, you would have jumped out of bed so fast. I mean, the covers wouldn't have been off of you and you'd have been running across the floor. Jesus has come.

Someone comes by. Let's fellowship. Let's talk about Jesus.

Let's pray. He felt a desire and a need to pray, to seek His face, to worship Him, to gather with other Christians, to read your Bible. But now after the years, He comes and you say, I've already done that.

I'm tired. That's a terrible thing. Chinese proverb says, a lover is not a man who can love 10,000 women.

A lover is a man who can love one woman 10,000 years. When things grow common to us, our heart grows cold. How many times, in how many ways, is Jesus Christ knocking at your door? You've got so many plans, so many desires.

You're so busy. And that TV, that TV is something, isn't it? It's just always on. Always on.

Always on. Always so much noise. Noise at home, noise at work, noise in the church.

And He says this. She says, I have taken off my dress. How can I put it on again? She wouldn't ask that when she first met Him.

She'd have had that dress on so fast. I've washed my feet. How can I dirty them again? When she first met Him, she would have walked through a sewer to get to Him.

But her heart has grown cold. Has your heart grown cold, believer? Is your life filled up with so many things that you no longer have the strength nor the time to be alone with Jesus and to seek Jesus? You might be moral. You might be godly.

You might even be memorizing Scripture. You might be faithful to this church or another local church, and I applaud you for that. But do you have time for Jesus? Remember, this is not a doctrine.

We are not disciples of a doctrine. Fellowship. Now, verse 4, My beloved extended his hand through the opening, and my feelings were aroused for him.

She's called him off. She's been dull of heart. But he stretches forth her hand again, an act of grace, and tries to arouse her heart.

You are so blind, if you're like me, to so many of the things that God puts in front of your life in order to arouse your heart. So many good and perfect gifts He gives you. So many things that the Lord does for you simply that you would turn your attention to Him, and yet you do not.

You do not. And even the gifts that He gives us to arouse our hearts so that we will turn to Him, it's like we snatch them out of His hand and then go play with them. Instead of allowing those gifts to cause us to run to Him.

And now, verse 5, 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. There is a real sense in which the Lord will never forsake His people.

There is another real sense in which the Lord is always with His people. But think back for a little while to that honeymoon time with the Lord, when His presence seemed to be so real in your life. And that went on for a while until gradually more and more and more you ignored His voice.

More and more you ignored His calling and more and more you allowed other things to take His place until one day you found yourself praying, as many of you do now. Many of you spend most of your time

praying, saying, Lord, please come, please come. I don't feel Your presence.

I don't feel Your pleasure. Please come, please come. Lord, where are You? Where are You? Where are You? Love offended doth draw back.

Our Lord is quite a lover, and as all lovers are, quite sensitive. That's why the Holy Spirit is not an eagle, so doth. There is a sense of being sensitive to the workings of God in your life and being sensitive to His callings in your life and being sensitive to Him when He says, come away.

Oh man, you've known this. You've known this in your own life. When your wife has said, why don't you just sit with me for a little while? Let's just talk.

Well, what would you want to do that for? I mean, I want to go outside and work on something. And you break her heart into six trillion pieces. Oh, there was a time when you would have fought an army of men to have an opportunity to sit with that girl and just talk.

Matter of fact, I knew that I loved my wife in the sense that I didn't even have to talk. If she was just sitting there, it was enough. It was enough.

But then even the most wonderful relationships can grow common when a man's heart is dull enough and his brain stupid enough. It's the same way with the Lord. This is not some heartless deity.

He calls you to come to Him. He calls you to fellowship with Him. He calls you just to sit alone.

My dear saint, when was the last time you just sat alone in the dark with the Lord and communed with Him? When was the last time you just walked with Him and talked to Him about all sorts and manner of things? As I've said so often, the more that I pass my years walking with the Lord and the more I study theology, the more childlike my life becomes. I've decided against this thing, Catholic idea, that there's such a thing as the secular and sacred. Because for the Christian, everything is sacred.

Everything to the glory of God and everything in His presence. You want to fast for seven days? Let's fast. We'll sense the presence of the Lord.

Want to read your Bible? Let's read the Bible and memorize Scripture and we'll sense the presence of the Lord. Let me grab my little boy and go play out in a field and I will sense just as much of the presence of the Lord. Let me walk with my dear friends through a woods on a snowy November day speaking about the things of God, going to our tree stands.

Let me sit there and worship God as I watch this squirrel He has made do so many things that the greatest gymnast would never be able to conquer. I've come to this conclusion. You are truly a godly and a spiritual man when you can look at the veins on the leaf of a tree and fall down and worship God with awe.

That's why sometimes I am so in disagreement with the idea of quiet time. Yes, I read my Bible a set time. I need to pray a set time.

But my religious life, if you can say, doesn't stop there. It begins there. It begins there.

Every moment that I'm walking, every moment that I'm talking, it should be in the presence of Christ. If I'm meeting with friends, Christ should be a guest. What part of my life should He be shut out of? You say, well, I don't want Him in a lot of parts of my life.

Then you need to change your life. Oh, this walking with Christ is so much different than most people think. It is so different.

He is my Lord. If He were to manifest even a slight bit of His glory, it would dash me to pieces. And yet, He walks with me and talks with me and He tells me I am His own.

I love to pray walking down paths. I love to look at things in books, extravagant things, from everything from science to everything, and marvel at God. To look at a platypus and be well aware of the presence of Christ, so much so that you go, Lord, why did you make that thing that way? I am not trying to be quaint and I am not trying to be cliché.

I am trying to tell you that when we say that a relationship with Jesus Christ is a relationship, that is exactly what I am trying to say. How should I be as a good husband? Sharing everything with my wife? Keeping all the channels open with my wife? Telling her all the most intimate things in my heart? Experiencing big joys and little ones? Everything. She wants to be in every part of my life and I want to be in every part of her life.

I don't want the children to grow up without her. I don't want them to grow up without the Lord. And I don't want to go fishing or on vacation or anything without her.

And I don't want to do it without the Lord. I don't want to eat without her. I don't want to eat without the Lord.

I don't want to laugh without Him. I don't want to cry without Him. I want Him everywhere.

When I'm reading a theological journal and when I'm looking at a catalog from the Bass Pro Shop, I refuse to have anything secular in my life. Do you want Him? He is such a friend, a friend dearer than a brother. Now, I want you to look at something she says in verse 5. 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.

There are some scholars who say that at this time when a man was courting a girl, that he would often leave if he knocked on the door and she wasn't at home, he would leave his calling card, a little pouch of scents, of things, of aloes, of things that we see here, and he would open up that pouch and pull some of it out and smear it all over the handles of the door so that she would know that even though she was not there, He had come. And that's wonderful, but a fragrance can never make up for a person. I can remember one time when my wife had to go back for studies and I was in the jungle and I couldn't come to the United States and we were separated for almost 90 days.

And I always look forward to coming out of the jungle if my wife wasn't traveling with me and heading home and just there she is at the door. And I can remember one of the saddest days of my life. I came out of the jungle.

I'd been there for weeks and weeks. Opened that door. The house was empty.

I remember going to her closet and rummaging around. She had this one sweater that she wore all the time. And I pulled that sweater down and I just smelled it.

I just held it. It still had her fragrance, but it could never replace her. There is so much of what we do in church that has a fragrance of Christ about it.

It's done in His name. It's done for His sake. It's done for His glory.

It's done in obedience to His Word. But all of that church, all that activity, even that good activity, will never replace Him. And believer, you can go out and you can come up to your pastor after the church and say, Pastor, you know, I just want to lay my life down.

What does this church need? I'll do anything. Wonderful. But that will not take the place of Christ.

And that will not take the place of a personal, intimate, ongoing, continuous relationship with Him. It just won't. Some of you tonight, not necessarily here.

I don't need people to come forward. But some of you here tonight, you just need to go home maybe. Or if you feel like here or anywhere, go off in a corner somewhere.

And you know, you're not in immorality right now. You're not in gross immorality or committing adultery or on drugs or lying or cheating or running around in drunkenness. But you know, I can avoid all that stuff and I'm still not a good husband.

I mean, there's nothing to brag about if I tell my wife, I don't cheat on you. I mean, I'm not supposed to cheat on her. She wants more than just a person who keeps the rules.

Someone asked me one time in Romania, what's the first thing you're going to do when you get home? I said, I'm going to kiss my wife. He said, what's the second thing you're going to do? I'm going to put my luggage down. That's what my wife wants.

That's what she wants. That's what she wants. She wants a person who wants her, not just a moral man who follows some how to be a good husband rule book.

In the same way, Christ desires a bride more than just obedience. A robot can be obedient. A dog can be obedient.

Christ desires you. I know you'll give him so much activity, but will you give him you? Because a fragrance, my friend, is just not enough. You want to talk about ministry? I tell seminary students this all the time.

I say, listen, most of you guys are so filled up with self wanting a big ministry. Well, let me just tell you something. Moses had about the biggest ministry anybody's ever going to have.

I mean, he had a big church. And it was not enough. Because after bringing them out of the land, he said this, Lord, show me your glory.

Lord, this ministry, all this fame, I know I'm going down in the who's who's book of religion. Lord, it's not enough. Show me you.

Show me you. And then it 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. So many believers today, so much ignored the voice of God that your prayer life is basically 15 minutes of searching for God and giving up. And you know that's true.

I said that last night and so many people came to me last night and said, man, you described me to a T. I pray for a few minutes, don't really expect God to show up. I go into certain petitions that I need to ask and

say amen and that's it. I called out for him and he did not answer me.

Verse 7, the watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me. They struck me and wounded me. The guardsmen on the wall took away my shawl from me.

A woman alone in the streets, no matter who she is, is in trouble. A church walking through this cruel, violent world alone is in trouble. If the king had been there beside her, not one of those guys would have even looked at her.

They would have put their heads down. They would have feared to look up for fear of being misinterpreted. They would have showed such respect, such reverence.

This girl belongs to the king. Shut your mouth, put your eyes down. But when the king is no longer walking beside her, she's just another girl.

What separated Israel from all the other nations? The presence of God. The favor of God. Fellowship with the one true God.

What will separate this church? It should be more than just doctrine. It should be more than just right practice. It should be the presence of God.

Your one goal in this church is to walk beside the king, no matter where he might take you. To walk with him and to be in his presence. To be in his presence.

Sometimes we're so afraid of charismatics and all this abuse we see on television that we forget that this is not only a supernatural conversion, it's a supernatural life. And we can seek the Lord. And this church ought to seek the Lord and as individuals we ought to seek the Lord with great expectation that He will be real to us in this place, that He will be real to us in our homes, that He will be real to us in the watches of the night.

We ought to. We ought to. Good doctrine without the presence of Christ is nothing more than a parrot quoting good books.

So they beat her, they abuse her, they mire her, they hurt her. Never forget this sheep and all these TV evangelists yelling at the devil and everything. That devil's not afraid of you.

He's afraid of the shepherd and you better stick very close to him. People marvel at how I was able to go through so many different terrible parts of the jungle and stay alive. Well, you know how I did it? It's not because I'm Indiana Jones.

It's because I didn't go anywhere that my brother Aguaruna didn't go first. And when we walked through the jungle, I stayed right by his side because I knew, regardless of the fact that I'm an outdoorsman in America and I like to hunt in America, that jungle is something totally different. He sat, I sat.

He stood up, I stood up. He moved, I moved. Why? He knew what he was doing.

I did not. There were things in that place that could kill me. But he knew.

I survived because I stood by his side. And that's the only way the church will make it through this world. Fear is such a good thing.

Fear is such a good thing if it keeps you holding on. Do you know we do not have persecution in America? It's coming, but we don't have it now. And do you know it's one of the reasons why in God's sovereignty there are often in the body of Christ people dearly, dearly loved who suffer terribly physical ailments that no man can cure.

And sufferings such as that are brought upon dearly beloved people in our congregation. The doctors, the good doctors, no one can help them. God ordains that among us.

Why? We don't have persecution to blow us to God. But God allows in His grace for certain situations to come into our lives and to come into our congregation where no man can help us and we run to Him. It is the strong winds against us that blow us to Him.

Now, verse 8, I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, as to what you will tell him, for I am lovesick. What kind of beloved is your beloved? Almost beautiful among women. What kind of beloved is your beloved that you would thus adjure us? Let me be kind of vulgar.

She says, O daughters of Jerusalem, O girls, please help me. Have you seen my groom? Have you seen my man? Have you seen the one I love? Would you help me find him? Would you seek him out also? Well, why should we? I mean, after all, he came to your door and you didn't even let him in. Why should we go looking for him? I mean, he can't be all that.

I mean, yeah, I've heard everything you've said about how wonderful he is and all this other stuff, but I mean, you don't even want to be with him. Why should we go look for him? Do you sense any application there? Oh, come to Jesus. Oh, come to Jesus.

You need Jesus. Well, why? I mean, after all, you supposedly belong to him and I can't see any passion in your life. I mean, he can't be all that.

You say you meet him in the house or whatever and I look at the way you live. I mean, what is he on your list? Number 10? Number 20? After all the other stuff? Would the world look at you? Now, I know, I know the doctrine of regeneration, doctrine of radical depravity. I'm not going to stand up here and say that if you would just love Jesus, the world would come to him.

I'm not going to say that. It's like someone said, what would happen, what would happen if all Christians were like Jesus? And I want to stand up and say, well, they'd crucify us. That's what would happen.

But there is at the same time a real sense, what are you so excited about? I mean, you know, this guy, he loved to do all these different things that we love to do and I mean, everything. He's running with us all the time. Now, all he can talk about is this Jesus.

I mean, you go over to his house, it's Jesus. I mean, just everywhere you go, he's just Jesus. I mean, who is this guy? Who is this Jesus that he could affect this man so? Do people look at you and say that? Do they? Who is this Jesus? Or when you say, hey, you know, come to church.

Well, why? You having a catfish supper? Why should I go there? You need Jesus. But you don't seem to need Jesus. Jesus is wonderful.

Oh yeah, right. That happens. That does happen.

Church, you have such a possibility. God has been working for the last several years in you to do things. I know that carnal-minded theologians and pastors and denominational workers would look at this church and say you've gone backwards.

Jesus would say, keep following me. But church, I'll tell you something you lack because it's something this preacher lacks. All of us lack it in a certain degree.

The world ought to be able to look at me and know that my heart has been stolen. The world ought to be able to look at me and know that a thief has come and stolen this heart. That my heart belongs to him.

Now, you know how usually when someone comes up to you and challenges you on something that you say, and you know how when you lose something you begin to realize just how wonderful is the thing that you lost. Well, that's what happens to her and I hope that's what happens to you tonight. When they say, well, who is this guy that we should follow him? And she says in verse 10, she says, My beloved is dazzling and rudy, outstanding among ten thousand.

His head is like gold, pure gold. His locks are like clusters of dates and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside streams of water bathed in milk and reposed in their setting.

His cheeks are like a bed of balsam, banks of sweet-scented herbs. His lips are lilies dripping with liquid mirth. His hands are rods of gold set with beryl.

His abdomen is carved ivory inlaid with sapphires. His legs are pillars of alabaster set on pedestals of pure gold. His appearance is like leaven and choice as the cedars.

His mouth is full of sweetness and is wholly desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend. O daughters of Jerusalem, she begins to wake up.

I want to scream at you and I want to say, Wake up, wake up! But I know that only the Holy Spirit can wake you up. Wake you up to what? How good you ought to be? Wake you up to what? How more involved in church service you ought to become? No, no, no! Wake you up to how wonderful He is and how much of that wonder you have forgotten. I want to wake you up to that.

And then, look at verse 1 of chapter 6. After she goes through this tirade, they say, Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful of women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek Him with you? Oh, man! We had no idea! Man! Boy, did we! Press your button! A light has come out of you. A beauty has come out of you. A fire has come out of you.

A passion has come out of you. Kindled by something, we want to meet this man. That's the way it should be with you.

We want to meet this man. This Jesus of whom you speak, where is He? I remember W.A. Criswell one day preaching, First Baptist Church, First Baptist Sermon in a First Baptist Church. That's exactly what it was.

And I think he was in the book of Colossians. I can't really remember. But that old man hit on a passage about Jesus.

You know, there's a lot of refined people in that church. The high culture of Dallas is in that church. But that old preacher, going through Colossians, all of a sudden began to see Jesus in that book.

And this is what he did. He backed up off that pulpit like this. And he just stood there.

And then all of a sudden, he backed up and he started going, Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! And he slapped his hands down. He goes, Oh folks, let me tell you about my Savior! And that old man went wild! He went wild! And that place went wild. As it should be.

As it should be. Let me tell you about my Jesus. Let me tell you.

Let me testify about my Lord. Twenty-two years ago, I woke up in my apartment, half naked, having drunk myself almost to death. I noticed that I was cold and I felt something on my face.

What was I lying in? I stumbled to my feet and I went to the mirror and I turned on the light. And this very distinguished, eloquent preacher, lost and without Jesus, had slept the entire night in his own vomit. Let me tell you about my Jesus.

He has saved me. When I was such a wretch, you would not have wanted to run me down with your car. But my Jesus, He bought me with His blood.

And my Jesus, He came to me. And my Jesus took away my sin. And my Jesus took away my shame.

Oh, hail the power of Jesus' name. Let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth a royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.

That's my Jesus. And I glory in my weakness. And I glory even in my sin.

Where did those stars go today? Have you ever asked yourself that question? Where did the stars go this morning? Did someone put them in their pocket and take them to another place? The stars were there. But there was so much light, they could not be seen. But I walked out.

The pastor picked me up on the side of the road. I was outside looking at those stars. And I could only see those stars because of all the blackness around them.

Sometimes young men will ask me, Brother Paul, what's the secret? How is it that you preach the way you do? How is it, Brother Paul, that you talk about things like that? How is it that we see the power of God? What's your secret, Brother Paul? He found me in a pool of vomit. That's my secret. That there are not many wise or noble.

I am the cheapest of all sinners. I was the lowest of the low. And that's what Jesus does.

That's my secret. I had nothing. That's my secret.

And you were probably much prettier than me on the outside. But I can assure you, you were not any prettier than me on the inside. They say to me, they say, how do you pray like that? How do you preach like that? I mean, what did you learn in your devotional time? No, you don't understand.

He saved me. He saved me. Where's that great motivation? Did you get it from some verse you read? You don't understand.

He saved me from what I was. There's no key except I was the worst in the pack. He saved me.

What else needs to be done to motivate me? What else needs to be done? Isn't salvation enough? This is my favorite part of the verse, of the passage, and this is for you. This is for all of you. She'd lost Him.

She was looking all over to find Him. And where does she find Him? My beloved has gone down to His garden, to the beds of balsam, to pasture His flock in the gardens and gather lilies. Where did she find Him? In the very place she left Him.

He did not leave her. She left Him. Now, here's the most important part.

To gather lilies. To gather lilies. And this is for you.

This is for you. This is for you. The whole sermon is based on those words.

To gather lilies. He shed His blood for me and you. He suffered the wrath of God for me and you.

He has saved me and you from more terrors than any of us could even know. He has given everything, watched over everything, been everything we ever needed Him to be. And yet He's somewhere down on our list of 5 or 6 or 10 or 20.

If someone did that to you, if a spouse did that to you, if someone treated you in that way, you would have almost an eternal hatred in your heart towards them. You would seek to hurt them. You would seek to show them how bad they are, how wrong they are, how much they hurt you.

You would make them pay. And I am sure, since she had only been taught from the world, that when she realized she had lost Him, she went after Him and she was wondering, will He receive me? Will He receive me? I mean, look what I've done. Will He take me back? Will He take me back? I mean, I don't know.

I mean, look at me. Now I'm beaten up. I'm soiled.

Men have had their hands on me. I don't know. Will He take me back? And she goes to the garden and there He is picking flowers to give to her the moment she returns.

Picking flowers. I don't care what you've done and I don't care what you've become. You come back to that garden and you will find the whole time you have been running, He has been in that garden picking flowers.

And the first thing that will happen when He sees you is He will say, Here, these are for you. I love you. Pastor.

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