

His Desire Is Towards Me

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Does this lovely utterance of the bride in the Song of Songs give expression to any experience that we have ever known in the secret of our soul's history with the Lord?

The bride could not always have spoken thus. There came a day when the vision of the Bridegroom filled her soul: when, for the first time, realizing something of the preciousness of His love, and the sweetness of His name she exclaims, "*Thy love is better than wine,*" and "*Thy name is as ointment poured forth*" (Cant. 1: 2, 3).

He became something to her, but was she anything to Him? This was the question that weighed upon her heart. She knew something of her deep need "I am black because the sun hath looked upon me": she knew something of His deep perfections, for she could say, "*Behold, thou art fair, my Beloved*" (Cant. 1: 16). Her heart went out in longing to Him, but was it possible that One so fair could have any affection for one so black? The desire of her heart finds expression in her request "*let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.*" If He loves me let Him give me the token of His love.

And then, in the progress of her history, there came a time when she heard the voice of her Beloved: "*My Beloved spake and said unto me, rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away*" (Cant. 2: 10) It was the personal call of the Bridegroom. He answers the longing of her soul. He lets her know that He has longings after her. He will not be without her: "*Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*" (Cant. 2: 13). And at once the glad response is drawn from the bride, "*My Beloved is mine, and I am His*" (Cant. 2: 16). It is true she has some sense that she belongs to Him, but the uppermost thought in her heart is, I have an interest in Him; He is mine; "MY BELOVED IS MINE."

But, in the progress of the Song of Songs, the bride passes through other and varied experiences, leading her into a deeper acquaintance with her Beloved. For a season the Bridegroom withdraws Himself, leaving the bride in darkness and alone (Cant. 3: 1, 2). The bride seeks her Beloved but cannot find Him. In vain she searches the city, He is not there; in vain she inquires of the watchmen, they cannot help her. But when she has passed them by, — when other helpers fail, then He discovers Himself to her in all His glory as the Bridegroom and the King. She sees the King crowned with glory and honour, but she sees the Bridegroom "in the day of the gladness of His heart" (Cant. 3: 4-11). And having revealed His own glory, He declares all that the bride is in His sight: "*Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee*" (Cant. 4: 7).

But alas, in spite of this wonderful unfolding of His thoughts toward His bride, her heart grows slothful, resting content in the assurance of His love. She fails to respond to His voice, and He withdraws, but only to reawaken yearnings of heart after Himself. If affections were dull in His presence, He will awaken them by His absence. She opens to Him, but He is gone: she seeks Him, but He cannot be found: she calls to Him, but there is no answer. In the city she is only exposed to sorrow and shame; her Beloved is not there.

But the absence of the Bridegroom has kindled afresh all her affections; her heart is longing to declare His glories. Her companions inquire, "What is thy Beloved more than another?" And at once her heart overflows with His praise. He is "the chiefest among ten thousand.... He is altogether lovely" (Cant. 5: 10-16.).

Her heart is filled with His glories, her lips tell forth His praise. He rises up before the vision of her soul. No longer is there need to seek Him; she knows where He is: "My Beloved is gone down into His garden" (Cant. 6: 2); she has found Him, and engrossed with the glories of the Bridegroom she exclaims, "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine" (Cant. 6: 3). Time was when her first thought was, "My Beloved is mine," *He belongs to me*; but now her first thought is, "I AM MY BELOVED'S," I belong to Him.

But blessed as these experiences are she has yet to make a deeper acquaintance with the heart of the Bridegroom. The vision of the Bridegroom had filled her soul, and she had witnessed to others of His glories (Cant. 5: 9-16), but now she is to taste the far deeper joy of hearing from the lips of the Bridegroom the thoughts of His heart about her: "Thou art beautiful, O my love," "How fair and how pleasant art thou" (Cant. 6: 4; Cant. 7: 6).

She tells others what the Bridegroom is in her sight, but He tells the bride what she is in His sight. In secret He pours into her ear all the delight that she is to Him. He would have her to know, not only how beautiful she is in His sight, but how precious she is to His heart: "My dove, my undefiled is but one, she is the only one" (Cant. 6: 9). Others there may be, but none can compare with the bride in His sight.

At once her heart responds with an outburst of joy, "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me" (Cant. 7: 10). Time was when she could say, with great delight, "*My Beloved is mine*"; then, as she ripens in acquaintance with Him, she says, "*I am my Beloved's*"; and finally, lost in wonder, as she hears from His lips the unfolding of the depths of His love to her, she exclaims, "I am my Beloved's, and HIS DESIRE IS TOWARD ME."

And does not every true believer know something of these experiences? Can we not look back to a time when, realizing our deep need, and something of the love and grace of Christ, we were drawn to Him? And yet, as we thought of the blackness of our hearts the question would arise, "Can it be possible that He loves me — even me?" And we longed to get some assurance of our personal interest in Christ: and then in answer to all these longings — for He satisfieth the longing soul — there came a day when, as we sometimes sing,

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto Me and rest."

We heard the voice of the Beloved — the voice of the Son of God — calling us to rise up from this poor world and come away. We heard Him say, "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone"; that the storm that was over our heads had burst upon His head — His thorn-crowned head. And as we looked by faith upon the risen Saviour all our fears were dispelled, like those of the disciples of old, as they heard Him say, "Behold My hands and My feet." Beholding those wounds, the witness of His death, the glorious truth was borne in upon our souls, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." We could say at last, He is my Saviour; "*My Beloved is mine.*"

How good to have the happy assurance that "Jesus is mine." But He would lead us on into a deeper knowledge of His thoughts to us-ward. He would have us begin at the cross, but He would not have us stop there. As with the disciples, He would establish our hearts with the story of the cross, telling us by the wounds in His hands and feet of a dying Saviour; and as with those same disciples, He would have us to pass on in our faith, and receive the wonderful message of the risen Saviour when He said to Mary, "Go to *My brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God and your God." He would have us know that not only He is our Saviour, but that we are His

brethren; His Father our Father, and His God our God. And as this message lays hold of our souls we can say, with great delight, "*I am my Beloved's.*"

How good to know that I belong to Christ, and Christ is mine. But is this all? We have received great benefits from the Lord, forgiveness, justification, the gift of the Spirit, shelter from judgment and a title to glory, and we can truly say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." But is this all the Lord had in view when He took that great journey from the throne in heaven to a cross on earth? Was it only for this that He who was rich became poor? Only for this that the Creator of the worlds became a stranger in the land? Only for this that He wept in the garden, and suffered on the cross? Was there no deeper, greater longing in His heart than just to confer benefits upon you and me? Indeed there was, and we wrong His great heart of love when we measure the greatness of His thoughts toward us by our poor thoughts of Him.

If we would know His thoughts toward us, we must look back before ever the earth was, before a single created being had a being; then in that great eternity He looked through time into an eternity beyond, and saw a great company of people according to the purpose of His own heart, and, beholding them, He could say, "My delights were with the sons of men."

And when He came into time, it is blessedly true that He healed our sicknesses and set the captive free; that He fed the hungry and clothed the naked; that He forgave our sins and raised the dead: all this He did, but He did more. Not only He met our needs, but beyond everything else He won the hearts of those whose needs He met. He attracted poor sinners and attached their hearts to Himself. He gave them to know that not only He was their Saviour, not only that they belonged to Him, but that His desire was toward them.

His desire is toward us, and therefore He became a poor Man, a lonely Man, a weary Man, and a thirsty Man to win our hearts. His desire is toward us, and therefore He suffered, bled and died to make us like Himself. His desire is toward us; and therefore is He coming again to receive us unto Himself that where He is we may be also. He seems to say, "I want you; I can dispense with your riches, your abilities, and even your service, but I cannot do without you. I want you so much that I became a poor Man to win your heart; I want you so much that I died to make you like Myself; I want you so much that soon I am coming for you to have you with Myself." And as we enter into His thoughts toward us, well may we each exclaim, with great delight, "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me."

How good, as I pass through a world of sin and sorrow, death and judgment, to be able to look up to the Man in the glory and say, "He is my Saviour."

More wonderful still as I pass through a world of dangers and snares on every hand, to be able to look up to the Saviour at the right hand of power, and say, "I am His."

But most wonderful of all to be able to say, "**There is a home in the glory that awaits me, and a Man in the glory that wants me.**" "His desire is toward me." He wants me so much that in the days of His flesh He wept for me and prayed for me, He suffered for me, and died for me; and all the days of my journey He is living for me; and soon — very soon — He is coming for me. And not till He has me with Him, and like Him, will the desires of His heart toward me be satisfied. But when all the redeemed are gathered home and His "new name's imprinted on every sinless brow," then shall we realize in a deeper, fuller way that His desire is toward us, and "He shall see of the fruit of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

"Sing, my soul! He loved thee,
Jesus gave Himself for me."