

# In Our Spiritual Fluctuations

## Christ Loves Us Still

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You can open your Bibles once again to the Song of Solomon. Let's pray. Father, we're coming to Your Word. Your Word. Speak, O Lord. Speak. Speak. May my brothers and sisters in this place hear more than the voice of a man. I pray in Christ's name, Amen.

The Song of Solomon. I look forward to looking at this Song with you one last time. Because, for one reason, just looking at it this week, two realities jumped out at me that once again just assure me and give me unwavering confidence that this is speaking of more than Solomon. And I want you to see it as we look at what we're going to look at today. Really, all my messages from the Song of Solomon have been moving us and directing us towards today. We've been thinking about the love of Christ. The breadth, and length, and the height, and depth. To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. That's why we've taken this trip back into the Old Testament, which I believe Spurgeon was right. When it comes to the love of Christ, this is the holy of holies.

Let's read in this Song in chapter 5. Chapter 5:2. "I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound. My Beloved is knocking. 'Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one, for My head is wet with dew, My locks with the drops of the night.' I had put off my garment. How could I put it on? I'd bathed my feet. How could I soil them? My Beloved put His hand to the latch and my heart was thrilled within me. I arose to open to my Beloved and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh on the handles of the bolt. I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when He spoke. I sought Him, but found Him not. I called Him, but He gave no answer."

### **Song of Songs is God-breathed**

I feel it's time to move on. I feel Ephesians is calling. I have one more sermon from this Song of Songs. You know it was called that. Look back in chapter 1:1, right at the very beginning. Look at the very first thing that's said. "The Song of Songs which is Solomon's." What I want you to recognize is we're holding in our hands a book that is God-breathed. All Scripture is God-breathed. This is Scripture. So whoever the author is, you can clear that right out of your mind. Whether it's Solomon or somebody else, the reality is this, this is the Word of God. And so what we have in this title is we have what God wants us to know this letter by. This is in God's estimation - this is so important that you get this. In God's estimation, for God to identify any song that has ever been sung by men, for God to look down, clear all the rest away, and leave that one standing and say: that is the Song of all songs. And it can only be because in God's estimation this is a song about the greatest imaginable thing that a song could ever be written about. That fact alone should lift us above the physical, above the worldly, above the mundane, above Solomon, up into the heavenlies to behold something beyond this. Something beyond Solomon and one of his thousand wives.

Listen, when it comes to relationships - and there's a relationship that's being put on display for us here - Christ and Christians are the greatest persons if you think about it - they're the greatest persons who have ever, ever partaken of humanity. And the truth is that in every relationship, anything that's good, anything that's excellent, anything that's desirable, anything that's beautiful, and all the relationships out there whether it be between a man and a woman - you know what Paul did. Paul looked at that and he said you may see a man and a woman, and that's maybe what you see here in this book, but he says what's behind all this is a mystery. The mystery of mysteries. Christ and the church. That's what we're supposed to see. The two greatest lovers of them all. You just never forget this. God Himself says this is the Song above every other song, which must mean it's about a topic that is above every other topic.

### **One Greater Than Solomon**

So we turn our attention here one more time, not to find Solomon, but something greater than Solomon and to behold once again His - He that is greater than Solomon - His love that He has for His bride, the church. Now, what I want to do is we're going to end up in these verses in chapter 5. But I want you to see, because you know what I've been doing over the last couple of months? I read this. I pore over this. (incomplete thought) I'll tell you what I'm watching is I'm watching fluctuation. You say: what do you mean? (incomplete thought) I mean, it's very interesting. Right here is one of the reasons why I know this is not speaking about Solomon. Solomon the man had all manner of imperfections. But you know what's interesting? As you watch this letter, and you go through from the beginning, it's 8 chapters and you go all the way through, you know what you see? You see in her fluctuations - spiritual alterations.

But you know what? When you look at Him, there's no movement. Oh, yes, there's movement as far as His proximity to her. But in His attitude towards her; in His responses to her, what you find is He's steady. She's the one that's given to fluctuation. And what I want you to see right now - what I want you to do is come with me and just walk through the ups and downs, the back and forth's of her. Look right at the beginning of the letter. Chapter 1:2. We're just going to do a quick survey, because I want you to see this. "Let Him kiss me..." v. 2 of chapter 1. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Your love is better than wine."

Now, what do you see there? What I see there is desire. You know what I see there? A woman who wants a man to kiss her, but she is not at that moment experiencing his kisses. But she desires it to be so. Right? You see that. Desire. And then, look at v. 4. "Draw me after You and we will run." You know what I see there? A desire for desire. You know, having desire is one thing. Having a desire to have desire is another thing. I mean, do you feel that? I mean, you feel the desire in v. 2, but then in v. 4, she's sensible of some need to be drawn. She's sensible of some sort of coldness or deadness in her spirit, and she secretly desires further quickening.

### **The Believer's Desire for Christ**

Now, brethren, what I want you to see in all of this is I want you to see something that every single Christian in this room can identify with. Every one of us. I want you to feel the movement and the fluctuations in our relationship with Christ. That's what I want you to feel here. She has desire. We are like that. We desire Him. But then, there are other times we're asking Him to draw us. There are times we recognize we don't long for Him like we should. We

want Him to operate on us and make us want what is good more than we want it. There's a desire for desire. You go to chapter 2:3-4. Look with me here. Song of Solomon 2:3-4; she says, "With great delight I sat in His shadow and His fruit was sweet." Now see, again, as Christians we can say we know these seasons of delight and sweetness. We know that. Christ came along and He upbraided that church at Ephesus because they had lost their first love. But there is some reality as first love. There's that sweetness to that love. That's what you see being put on exhibition for us there.

Now, look, I'm going to tell you that the next thing I see here is a decline. Now you may have question about that at first, but stay with me. I see a decline in the affection. Because what I see here is a distance. You see, last we heard, she was in His shadow. That's close. You're close when you're in someone's shadow. Later on, we're going to see, she's leaning on Him. There's actual contact there. She's close. But notice what happens in chapter 2:9. Just go down a little bit from v. 3-4 to v. 9. Now follow me. "Behold, there He stands..." But where is He? He's behind our wall. Now, I probably should have done more with just this possessive pronoun "our." It shows up in every translation. I'm just not going to take the time to go there, but I find that - it's "our wall." Maybe because it's "our" house.

But notice this, He stands behind it. What does that mean? He's behind the wall. Does that mean He's on the inside? Or does that mean He's on the outside? And where is she at? Look at the position. He's behind the wall. He's gazing through the windows looking through the lattice. Who knows what a lattice is? What's a lattice? (unintelligible) It's an opening of some sort that you look through. Which direction is He facing? He's looking through it. Is He on the outside looking in? Is He on the inside looking out? What's He looking at? I'll tell you what He's looking at. He's looking at you, Christian. You say: how do you know that? I know that from v. 10. You see what He's saying? "Arise My love, My beautiful one, come away." He's speaking to her. This basically is a picture of Him standing there at a distance. He's on the other side of the wall. He's behind the lattice. He's gazing through the window. What is this wall that has come between them? Between Him and us. What's happened? She was in the shadow before. Now He's looking through the window. Some sort of distance has taken place.

And you know what you find all the way through? He's calling to her. He's constantly calling to her. No matter how far away she gets; no matter what walls come up, He's just always calling. That is the steadiness of Him. What's happened to us? See, we can enter in here. We realize some distance has come between us and Christ.

### **The Beloved Calls**

And you know what, the devil's right there to say He doesn't want anything to do with you. And yet, if you'll open your eyes and ears to Scripture, He's constantly bidding us, "Come. Come. Come." He's speaking. Whatever coldness has crept in, He's not silent. Look at v. 10. From the other side of the window, He's saying, "My Beloved speaks..." that's her. She's recognizing this. She's recognizing that He speaks. Oh, it is so good when we recognize He's calling us. Don't be deceived, brothers and sisters. He's calling. But watch. "He says to me, 'Arise, My love, My beautiful one and come away.'" And you see this in v. 13-14. And again, "Arise, My love, My beautiful one..." You see, it's repetitive. Why? What's repetition in Scripture? You know what it is. It's emphasis. What's the emphasis? The emphasis isn't on the other side

of the wall. The emphasis is: Come away. Come away. Why? Because that's what God wants you to get. That's what He really wants you to hear. Open your ears, brethren. Come away. Come away. "Arise, My love, My beautiful one and come away. Let Me see your face. Let Me hear your voice. Your voice is sweet. Your face is lovely."

And then you see - look at v. 1 of chapter 3. Go to chapter 3:1. Now you see, she's not with Him. At one time, she's in His shadow. Another time, He's on the other side of the window. He's calling to her. Where is He now? I know this. He's not with her. Or maybe I should put it like this, she's not with Him. "On my bed by night, I sought Him whom my soul loves." There's a stirring of desire here on her part. "I sought Him but found Him not." He's not with her. She's not with Him. And you know what? She can't find Him. Again, the Christian life. There are times when it's like some cloud has come. And you look and you can't find. Where is He? He hides His face. We all know that. That's reality to the Christian. But... look at v. 4. And you know what happens. See, He departs for those seasons, but it's not to be cruel. And it's not because He lacks desire to us, because every time He comes popping back up in this story, it's with such desire for her. But He doesn't depart to be cruel. He departs so that she might think on Him and muse about Him and have her passions stirred up about Him.

And see what happens when there's those seasons of departure? When she finds Him after that - after you seek and you don't find for a season and you can't find Him and you can't find Him, there's this darkness; there's this wall; there's this distance; there's this coldness, and you search for Him and you search for Him and then He comes. Oh, how you value that! And look at it. Look what she says. She says, "Scarcely had I passed them when I found Him. I found Him whom my soul loves." And look, she's not casual now. "I held Him and I would not let Him go." But you know the problem is we're such vacillating creatures. We know that. He's come back again. And we're like I'm holding on to Him. I'm not letting Him go. I'm not going back down in that valley. I'm not going back out in the desert. I'm not going back to where I don't know where He is. I am not going to let sin creep in. I am not going to grieve the Spirit. We make these resolutions. We plead - you ever been there? Pleading with the Lord: Please Lord, don't ever let me go back to the way it was. Keep me here on this mountaintop always. You ever been there? I've been there. Because the pitiful thing about this - it's the reality.

### **She is Sleeping**

Now we go to chapter 5. And in v. 2, she says - and the interesting thing is, she's not with Him anymore. In fact, she's sleeping. She's fallen asleep. She's not with Him again. She's allowed separation - again. She's not dead like those who know not the Lord. There's still reality in her heart. Still His voice resonates with her. Her heart is awake. And we know this. Christ's sheep hear His voice. There's still, though we can become cold and calloused in seasons. And He's speaking to her, and like always here, what's He saying? What does He say to her? "Open to Me." Oh, if we only had ears to hear that. He's saying it all the time to His people. "Open to Me." "My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one." And notice the excuses. Yes, this is us as well. Again, you know what I want to emphasize to you? You will never find Him making excuses. He is always saying, "open." He is always calling to her. He doesn't make excuses. Only she does.

Now look, if you went back to the earthly Solomon and one of his brides, you would not find such perfections in him. He was not a perfect man. We know that. But here, we're dealing with a Solomon who is perfect. We're dealing with One who is constantly in the right frame; constantly expressing His love; constantly loving - no matter how He's treated, He's constantly expressing His desire. It's unwavering. It's unchanging. She's the one that vacillates. She makes excuses. He never does. That's not real to life. That's not real to a man and a woman in any marriage here. The man and the woman both have their problems. What's interesting is in the Song of Solomon only she has problems. He never does. He's perfect. He's altogether blameless, altogether beautiful, altogether desirable, the chief among ten thousand. You find that. And notice: "I put off my garment. How could I put it on? I bathed my feet. How could I soil them?" And brethren, I'll just say this, do these verses not agree to the experience of us all? Our Lord is bidding us to come. This is such a cheap excuse. But does it not resonate with us? And then you see what happens. She moves, but she moves too late. And He's gone. Look at v. 4 and following. "My Beloved put His hand to the latch. My heart was thrilled within me. I arose to open to my Beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh on the handles of the bolt. I opened to my Beloved, and my Beloved had turned and gone." He was gone. "My soul failed me when He spoke. I sought Him but found Him not. I called Him but He gave no answer." How did she get back here again? By her own excuses and by her own sleep. She delayed and now He's gone. And she can't find Him. And then you look what happens in v. 7. She gets a thrashing. "The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. They beat me. They bruised me. They took away my veil." These watchmen of the walls. And the reality is, with His departure, she becomes exposed to such things as she would have never been exposed to if she had gotten up in time. She's suffering this for her own consequences. If she'd gotten up in time, He'd be with her and none of this would have ever happened. And the thing about it is, it just makes me think, as a Christian, we can bear trials as long as He's with us. Have you been in the midst of a trial and you can't find Him? He's gone? And there's no answer? Yeah, that's where Job was. Job in the midst of all of his trials, you don't see him bemoaning too much the loss of his children or the loss of his riches. The thing he really bemoaned was the loss of the face of God. And that makes any trial most miserable.

### **Where Is My Beloved?**

And you know what's interesting? From this point to the end of this Song, it's not apparent when she finds Him again. You will find no specific verse that says, "I found Him." Not after this. But, we only know that she does find Him. How do we know that? Well, look at chapter 8:5. What we find after this through the rest of this Song is just enormous amounts of mutual adoration. She overflows about Him. He overflows about her. But when exactly she finds Him, we're not made overly aware. We just know that she does find Him because in chapter 8:5, "Who is that coming up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved?" Well, she's at His side now. And you know what's interesting for all that? There's never any indication of separation after that. And yet, when you get to the very last verse of this Song of Solomon, notice what it says. Chapter 8:14, she ends with these last words. Looking to Christ, she says, "Make haste." "Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a gazelle." Gazelles are fast. "...Or a young stag on the mountains of spices." Make haste. To me, that's a perfect finale. Because it resonates with that

finale we find in Revelation, does it not? The Spirit and the bride - what are their words as you end the Scripture? "Come." Make haste, Lord. Come. Because the reality is - the reality of all this is that no matter how much you have here, you want Him to make haste to come so that we might have something even better, even fuller, even deeper, even richer.

### **Spiritual Fluctuations**

So, you have these separations. You have excuses. You have her finding Him. You have her close. You have Him departing. What makes this so wonderful and so practical is that every one of us true Christians in this room - we know this. We feel this. This is reality. This is reality. Seasons where we can't find Him. Seasons where He's silent. Seasons when we're close. Seasons when we desire more desire. Lord, draw me. Seasons when, ah, we want. We desire. Seasons when we have Him. Seasons when our souls are ravished by Him. But this is our experience - fluctuation. Spiritual fluctuation are all part of it. In heaven, there is going to be a sense - I want to be careful how I say this. In heaven, there's going to be this glorious unchangeableness. But by that, I don't mean static. I just mean this: I think everything increases, because I think Edwards was right. Because the longer we're in heaven, the more we're going to come to know Him and to know Him is to love Him, so with the increase of knowledge will come the increase of love. But I see it unchangeable in the sense that it's this unchangeable increase. There will never be the decrease that we experience here because here it's spirit and flesh. The spirit is willing, and... the flesh is weak. That's where we find ourselves. In heaven, there's going to be this increasing consistency in our love, in our communion, intimacy, fellowship. But how given to change we are here!

And it's not just us. You know what? Don't you love that Scripture is real? I mean, you go to it and what do you find? Abraham - a friend of God. Certainly here is a pillar of faith. Certainly here in Romans 4, he's set forth. His faith didn't waver. Well, what's this with Pharaoh? Abraham, you couldn't trust the Lord well enough to protect you and Sarah to not be letting Pharaoh snatch your wife away? Or, Elijah - I mean, bold! 400 prophets of Baal. Where is Baal? Maybe he's gone on a vacation? In the literal, it's: maybe he's in the bathroom. But then he's running away from Jezebel. David - you see David - he makes expression, surely, one of these days, Saul is just going to catch me. Yet, he can hear the threats of Goliath and he is bold as a lion. There are fluctuations, fluctuations. We see it. I mean, sometimes, Samson looked like a champion. We know he was one of the people of God. And there's other days, he didn't look so good. Solomon himself - what wavering, what vacillating! We see that. We're vacillating. We're unsteady. We waver.

### **There Is No Fluctuation with Him**

But you know what's beautiful about the Song of Solomon? Is He, our Beloved, there's no fluctuation with Him. There's steadiness. Steadiness. You know what I find? She made her excuses. He still addresses her as "My love." She's been asleep. He still addresses her as "My love." There's been separation. He still addresses her as His love. He still is inviting her to come close. He still calls her. Just look at it. Look at chapter 2:13. Notice. He says, "Arise, My love, My beautiful one, and come away." But then when we get to chapter 3, He's gone. He's not with her. There's been some separation. She's thinking about Him. She pursues Him - can't find Him. But

notice, when He shows up again, Song of Solomon 4:1. "Behold, you are beautiful, My love. Behold, you are beautiful." She's been asleep. She's fallen asleep. Take this as spiritual sleep. We slumber sometimes. We fall into some spiritual sleep and what happens? There He is again. "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one." Even when she's been sleeping. And then beyond that, she makes the excuses. Well, I can't get up and let Him in. My feet are clean. And you know what, even after that, after that account, when you go to Song of Solomon 6:4-5 - see, there's no movement on His part. There's no excuse-making. He simply says, "You are beautiful as Tirzah, My love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners. Turn away your eyes from Me, for they overwhelm Me."

This is what you need to grasp. On your worst day, you're still His love. His sister, His friend, His bride. None of that ever changes. Do you see that? Do you feel that? In this state of grace in which we stand, oh, how many fluctuations and alterations and changes do we experience, and yet the reality of all this is, Christ's love to us remains unmoved, it remains the same. Once loved, forever loved. That's the reality of all this. No inconsistency on His part. Yes, flesh and blood, united to us - or flesh and spirit. The spirit willing... we feel weighed down by the flesh. We feel its tug. I'll tell you this, consistent uninterrupted communion with Christ - greatly to be desired, greatly to be sought. And I'll tell you, we should be moving towards that. We should be longing towards that. But the realities in this life is it does get interrupted. There's yet unsubdued corruption and it gets the best of us. And we've all been there as Christians. And yet His voice - it's like through all of it though, even on our worst day, even when we fall into temptation, even when we're discouraged and we're cast down, and yet the thing about His voice, His voice all the way through this song - it's a Song! He's singing over His bride. He sings to us constantly this voice. Chapter 5:2, "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one, for My head is wet with dew, My locks with the drops of the night."

### **Causes of Sleep**

The causes of sleep - let's think about this. She's sleeping. (incomplete thought) Oh, that's another thing. You'll notice this. She sleeps. You'll find her on her bed. He never sleeps. You'll never find Him sleeping one time in this whole Song. He doesn't sleep. And I was thinking, what are some of the reasons that we go to sleep? Spiritual sleep. Spiritual slumber. You remember this? "When Christ arose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow. And He said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.'" You know one of the reasons we can go to sleep? Sorrow. Trials. (incomplete thought) You know, if anyone in here says the Christian life is easy, you haven't lived it that long. Through many tribulations - and be sure, that's no exaggeration. Momentary light affliction, but affliction nevertheless. (incomplete thought)

Not every season's the same. I'll grant you that. And we're all in different seasons. There may be some commonalities that overlap with some of us here, but we're all in different seasons. (incomplete thought) We're all at a different place in the race. Some more near the beginning, some more near the end. We're at different places of maturity. We're in different forms and shapes of trials in our life. But you know, we can get to places where we're just barraged by temptations. We're barraged by emotions like sorrow and grief. And then there's this, sometimes just discouragement. We get discouraged. Discouraged with our own growth,

discouraged by our own lack of sanctification, discouraged by God not doing everything that we desire God to do. We can just get discouraged. And you know what? We can get weary. Just with striving, just with the spiritual exertion required especially in some seasons. The truth is, why do you think there are texts that say not to get weary in well-doing, and we should pray and not faint? Because the reality is we get worn down. I feel that. Oh, there are some seasons that are a breath of fresh air. There's these reviving winds. But there are times when it's difficult and we get worn out. And that can put us to sleep. We can sleep for sorrow. You can want to sleep when things get difficult. Because you know what, when they get difficult, you want to turn aside. You want to lay down. You want to withdraw. You want the trial to stop.

Or there's this, and it comes out of this letter too. Another way we fall to sleep is by neglect of prayer. And you see that in the same text. "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation..." is what Scripture says. Watch and pray that you may not... you see, it's not "sleep and pray," because you don't pray when you're asleep. Neglect of prayer. Staying awake. You know, in Scripture, being alert, being awake, goes hand-in-hand with praying. Oh, Christian, we can very foolishly get to the place where we lay a small priority; we give little credence to prayer. We can get to the place where: Oh, I can miss the prayer meeting. It won't affect my life. I won't go to sleep. And yet, Jesus is specifically saying watch and pray. And these two things: an alertness, an aliveness, an awareness - it goes hand-in-hand with prayer. Oh, it's okay that I didn't get into the secret place today. I did it three days ago. It's okay that I don't go to the prayer meeting this week, because after all, it won't matter. It won't matter. I won't be more asleep for not having been there. That's not true. Be very careful. Be very careful. Not praying is not being watchful and you go to sleep. And that's exactly what he is describing here. Sleep takes you. The individual who sleeps - you think about it - they're not cognizant. They're not aware. When you're sleeping, you're not really aware that you're asleep. You're aware of dreams, but you're not really aware of reality. You're disconnected from reality. That's the reality with sleep. While you sleep, you can't discuss sleep. You can't contemplate how you sleep. Why? Because you're asleep.

Or besides these two things - we get weary, we get negligent of prayer. How about this? (incomplete thought) Have you ever been around somebody that yawns? You're in a group of people and you watch somebody yawn over here and then, something happens in our brain. You get around yawning persons and it's contagious. There's something to that. So it is spiritually speaking. If you want to fall asleep, truthfully, you want to fall asleep? Surround yourself with spiritual sluggards. It will put you down. I'll tell you, there is nothing like, if you're in biography or you're in the church, there is nothing like surrounding yourself with people who run faster than you do. People who are all out. You want to fall asleep? I'm talking about professing believers who are just content with the way their life is. They're just an example of slumbering Christianity. The contented - you know the kind. They're just coasting. Contented coasters. Or worse, the complainers. The cold. Those who are just cold water on any sort of heat in the church, alertness, any sort of fire to live for Christ and run for Christ and have intimacy with Christ. Surround yourself with those kind of people. They're just a wet blanket, a cold bucket of water. That'll put you down. Get around people who, you know, you want to talk about something spiritual but it always goes carnal. That'll put you to sleep. That's a sleep-inducer.



What's the hallmark of sleepers? (incomplete thought) You know what it's like. Somebody wants to sleep? They often want to be alone. You know, if one of my children gets sick and they want to sleep, where do they go? They go to be alone. Scripture actually says something about being alone. "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire." It says that in Proverbs. That's not such a good thing. People who want to sleep typically don't want to be around those that are on fire. Men who want to sleep - what do they like to do too? I mean, oftentimes, my wife closes the blinds. Why are you closing the blinds? People can see us in here. Well, we're on the second story and we've got trees all the way around and I like to see the light come through. But typically, people when they sleep, they close the blinds. They draw the curtains. Why? They want dark. Or they don't want people to see them.

That's true of people that want to sleep. They don't want to be in the light. You know, there's something about light. Guys that have to work third shift, to me, that would be extremely difficult because there's something about light. In fact, they say that about people who live like up in Alaska, and the closer you get to the Arctic Circle where in the summertime - our sister was up there working way up in Canada. You can ask her what that was like in the summertime. You know, where your days are 18 or 20 hours long. Very difficult to sleep when there's light. You want to not sleep? Come in the light. Come where the light is. Get away from the slumbering life and example of some professing Christians. Those who sleep, sleep at night.

### **Discerning Our Sleep**

How do you discern your own sleep? Well, there's a couple good rules. Are you running as well as you did before? I mean, that's where Jesus goes with the church at Ephesus. You know, you have this coming from the mouth of Paul: You did run well. That was said of the Galatians. You did run well. In other words, he's implying, you're not running well now. But you did run well. That's often a good marker. Did I run better in the past? Did I have a greater love in the past? What's another way? Another way is compare yourself. Example is powerful in Scripture. But compare yourself to people who you know are godly and who do run well. If you're sadly lacking, that can be a good way to discern your own sleep. But you just have to ask. Joy. Joy in the singing. Has that diminished? You know, you can tell. You can kind of feel if you've grieved the Spirit in your life. Because part of the fruit - that so desirable fruit that comes from the Spirit, a certain aspect of that is joy. And you know when you begin to lose joy in prayer and you lose joy going to the Word and you lose joy in the singing, that can be a real wake up call. Something is lacking. Something isn't here. You can tell that something is diminished. There's this fluctuation. You're kind of on the down side of things. Coming into the presence of Christ is just not so thrilling to your soul, not so exciting. (incomplete thought) We get sloppy. You get sleepy. You get sloppy. Somebody was just telling me recently about being in class and taking notes. And I remember, being in college myself, and you're so tired and you're taking the notes and the prof is writing on the board up there or on the overhead, and you're taking these notes and you just fall asleep. That's what happens when you sleep. You get sloppy. And remember what it's like in Malachi? What kind of offerings are you bringing Me? Blind? You go offer that to your governor. We can get sloppy in what we're offering to the Lord. That's what happens when you go to sleep.

## The Greatest Offense

Brethren, before we wrap this up, what I want you to see is the greatest offense in all of this. Notice Song of Solomon 5:2, "I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound, my Beloved is knocking." Oh, I want you to see something here that you probably have missed up till now. "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one. For My head is wet with dew, My locks with the drops of the night." And she responds: Well, I'd put off my garment, "how could I put it on? I bathed my feet. How could I soil them?" And yet, here is Christ saying, "My head is wet..." and she's saying, "I've put off my garment." "My locks drip..." She's saying, "I've bathed my feet." May God give us eyes to see what's happening here. When the Lord calls to His love and He says these words: "My head is wet with dew," that may not strike you at first as it ought, but here's the thing, don't imagine that prior to Him coming to her door, He was out in the middle of the fields sitting there getting wet and now He's wet and He says, I know what I'm going to do, I'm going to go to My love's bedroom and knock. That's not the picture.

Rather, the picture you probably want to see here is He was dry and He came to the door. And He began knocking. And He knocked so long and He called so long that the dew settled on Him. I think that's the picture that you want to see. He was wet. He was wet due to the time he stood outside that door knocking. Not because of what He was doing before He came knocking. And I would just say this: what love! And what patience! Oh, have you not found it so? Has Christ not been abundantly patient with us? Have you not repeatedly said, oh, what a fool I am! And He still says, "Come to Me, My love." He continues knocking. He continues calling until His head is wet with the dew. And what does she do? What do we do? Well, you know what we do? We miss His heart. (incomplete thought)

Get the picture! This is a bedroom. Christ comes. Excuse me if you have tender ears, but He wants to make love to your soul. And we have excuses. I can't go to prayer. I can't go walk with Him. I can't go meditate on what He says to me. I don't have time for this. Because after all, I have social media. We are fools. And I'll tell you this, what this says to every one of us is we could have more. And He wants more. And He calls to us to give us more. Oh, what excuse making on our part! What hesitations! I won't put my garment on and risk soiling my feet. Oh brethren, that sounds silly. It's almost like to write that in here, what silliness! Oh yeah, but if we're honest, we've probably missed intimacies with Christ for even more silly excuses.

Isn't that the way we live our lives? We're constantly measuring. Should I do this? Should I do this? We're constantly making these decisions. Should I sit down and do this? Should I do this? Should I do this? And in these decisions that we make, oh, on a regular basis, every one of us would confess we've made decisions. We've hesitated.

That's the thing. Hesitations. He's come to His bride at night to her bedroom ready for intimacy. He calls to her. He knocks. He beckons until His head is wet with dew. And what's she doing? She's making excuses. And I would just say this, brethren, look, sometimes we can take this idea from Scripture about hastiness. Whoa, I'm not going to be hasty. I'll tell you this, you should be hasty to run into the arms of Christ. You should be hasty to spend time with Him. We deliberate too much. We're too cautious. Too much calculation. Too much carefulness on our part when it comes to living all out for Christ and being for Christ and being with Christ. Right here, His unimaginable love is put on display. He endures such indignities from us as to sit outside that door and knock and call to us until His head is wet with the dew. Christ endures

indignities from His church. And we all have to raise our hand - this is true to our experience. We all know it. We feel it. Still, after this insult, in chapter 6:4, "You are beautiful as Tirzah, My love." He's making us beautiful. And we just can never get away from that. "Lovely as Jerusalem." He says, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they overwhelm Me."

Yes, when she delayed, He turned and He left. But again, I'll tell you, it's not to be cruel. And if you look right there, if you've got your Bibles open to chapter 5, you'll see that when He left, "my Beloved had turned and gone," when you get over to v. 10, you know what it produces in her? It produces her thinking about Him. Her longing for Him just erupts. "My Beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand..." See what His departure did? It causes a yearning. It's a good thing. It's a good thing.

### **His Desire Is For Us**

And He's withdrawn, but it's only for a season. It always is for His children. Because His heart really is like this. It's yearning for His people. What you need to see here is Christ never has enough of you and your affections. You'll remember back there in Ephesians 3 where we came from. It's that Christ might dwell in your hearts through faith. It's Christ coming close. He desires that. He will have more and more of you. That's why He says to a church like Ephesus: Repent! I will remove candlesticks if I do not have your love. It means that much to Me. He will have our love. And He still greatly desires her. He will have your love more and more. He will have your hearts more and more. He desires further entrance into your heart, into your affections, that He might dwell there more deeply all the time.

I'll tell you, He is not content with any of this until we're all in heaven. And you see it in that high priestly prayer. I mean, when He's praying to His Father there in John 17, He says: "My desire is that they be with Me where I am." And that's where we're all headed. He's not content. His desire is that we would be with Him. You answer me, Christian. When there's any separation, when there's any coldness or strangeness between your soul and Christ, are you going to blame Christ? Will you blame Him? Not when He's the one who is portrayed in Scripture as standing at the door and knocking - even knocking until the very locks of His head are dripping with dew. This speaks loudly to the fact that He takes no delight or desire in separation or distance between us. And look, when we don't prize Him as we ought to, and we make our excuses against drawing close to Him, it's no wonder that He draws away at times. He knocks. Oh, He knocks. Therefore, we should lay the blame on ourselves. If we don't know more of revival, more of the ravishing of the soul, more of filling, more of glory, typically, we can blame ourselves for that because of choices that we've made. Look, what you have to gather from this is nothing contents Him about saving a people but intimacy. Eternal life is that we might know Him. Intimacy. That's it. What condescension on His part!

I mean, you think about this. You think about this. He's in heaven. I mean, He asked His Father to restore Him to the glory that He had with the Father before the world began. That's happened. He's in the glory. Surrounded by angels. He's got His Father at His right hand. And seriously? For all that, He comes to us down here? And He asks us to open to Him? And He speaks such sweet things to our souls? And He even stands outside and gets His head wet? And we make excuses? What is this? Look, what has all this been about? It's been about the love of Christ. Is there any such love like this for anybody? He laid down His life. He comes. He

knocks. Look, He comes out of love for us. He knocks out of love for us. He lets His head grow wet for love for us. He waits for us. He calls to us.

I would just say this, for any of you believers out here, you've relapsed. Oh, we don't like "backsliding" in our circles. It's too much of the carnal Christian. Yeah, but there are seasons where Christians get carnal, and you can call them carnal Christians just like the Corinthians were called carnal Christians and the reality is this, we do backslide. We do have fluctuations. And I would just say to any who have relapsed in any way, don't be discouraged to return to Him but at once! Go to Him! Don't stay away. Don't stay at a distance. The church here was drowsy, sleepy, treated Christ unkindly, made excuses, yet He's so patient and He waits for her, like at her leisure, you could say. Constantly saying, "open to Me, open to Me." You just remember times like Thomas, how condescending Christ was. He didn't just blast him for his unbelief. Come. Come. Put your finger in here. Or Peter after the rejection. He comes to him. Be encouraged. Christ never has enough of His church. And He's calling, calling, calling. "Come closer. Come, My love." Just let this grab you through this whole thing, He never ever stops calling her His love. She may mistreat Him. He doesn't stop calling her His love. "Father, I desire that they may be with Me where I am." You hear His voice in this. "Come away. Come away. I desire to see your face." If you've got eyes to see, if you've got ears to hear, something greater than Solomon is here. Father, I pray that Your Word would speak to Your people. I pray it in Christ's name, Amen.