Message Five

The Fifth Stage of Song of Songs—Sharing in the Work of the Lord

Scripture Reading: S. S. 7:1-5, 11-12

I. Solomon is the lord of many vineyards (S. S. 7:12), which require much labor; at this point the Shulammite must share in the work of the Lord to become God's co-worker; what a privilege and glory that men can work together with God to be God's co-workers (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1a)!

II. To share in the Lord's work, we need to be qualified, which depends on our being equipped with all the attributes of the divine life expressed in human virtues; the Spirit reviews the lover's virtues, which are signs of her maturity in the divine life and qualify her to work with the Lord—S. S. 7:1-5; cf. 2 Cor. 1:12; 2:14-17; 11:10a; 1 Thes. 2:1-12:

A. God's unique work is to work Himself in Christ into His chosen people, making Himself one with them for the Body of Christ—Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17a; 4:16:

1. We cannot serve God beyond what we are as a person—Paul says, "By the grace of God I am what I am…"—he was a person filled and constituted with Christ as grace, which is God for our enjoyment—1 Cor. 15:10a.
2. As a result of this, Paul continues by saying, "And His grace unto me did not turn out to be in vain, but, on the contrary, I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me"—v. 10b.
3. *Not I but the grace of God* equals *no longer I…but…Christ* in Galatians 2:20; thus the grace that operated in Paul was not some matter or some thing but a living person, the resurrected Christ, the embodiment of God the Father who became the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, who dwelt in the apostle as his everything.
4. Paul's ministry was to dispense the riches of Christ as God's grace into His chosen people for their enjoyment, issuing in the building up of the church—Eph. 3:2.

B. In Song of Songs the Lord's loving seeker is spoken of as the "prince's daughter" (7:1); this indicates that a lover of Christ should reach the maturity in His royal life to reign in life through the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17).

C. The Spirit reviews her beauty in the gospel preaching (footsteps in sandals)—S. S. 7:1; Rom. 10:15:

1. The preaching of the gospel will protect us and keep us from being defiled by the earth; part of the church's armor of God is "having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace"—Eph. 6:13, 15.
2. Christ made peace for us, with both God and man, on the cross, and this peace has become our gospel (2:13-17); this gospel of peace has been established as a firm foundation, as a readiness with which our feet may be shod.
3. Being thus shod, we will have a firm footing that we may stand to fight the spiritual warfare; the peace for such a firm foundation is Christ—6:14.

D. The Lord says concerning His loving seeker: "Your neck is like a tower of ivory"; ivory in typology signifies the resurrection life; thus, her neck, signifying her will, is full of resurrection life—S. S. 7:4.

E. Next the Lord speaks of her eyes: "Your eyes, like the pools in Heshbon / By the gate of Bath-rabbim"—v. 4:

1. In Song of Songs 1:15 her eyes were likened to doves' eyes, but in 7:4 her eyes are likened to pools; the doves' eyes are spiritual, but the eyes like pools are fully open to the light and are enlarged and broadened to cover the whole universe.
2. These pools are located by the gate, which is for coming in and going out, signifying the communication of fellowship, which depends upon our broadened sight; these are reflecting pools, which indicates that her sight is full of light.
3. We must become so enlarged in our vision that we not only see and care for the work where we are, but we also care for the Lord's interest on the entire earth and in the whole universe.

F. The Lord highly values her because she has a "nose like…the tower of Lebanon"—v. 4:
1. A nose like the tower of Lebanon means that the Lord's loving seeker has a spiritual sense of high and sharp discernment; Philippians 1:9 indicates that we should not love others foolishly but should love them soberly with love that abounds in full knowledge and sensitive perception.
2. The faculty of smell is found only with the mature ones; this sense does not come from spoken words or visible things; it is an inward ability from the intuition in our spirit that enables a person to differentiate good and bad smells.
3. This spiritual intuition enables a person to identify the things that are of God; it is not by reason or logic but by a spontaneous and inwardly accurate feeling, which enables a person to discern spiritual matters.
4. At the same time, this olfactory sense enables a person to identify bad smells as well; many teachings cannot be considered to be wrong, and many people have nothing that others can find fault with, yet we sense that something is off.
5. You may tell the Lord's servant that everything is fine, but immediately he senses something wrong, something not genuine, and something not in harmony with the Lord; this is the safeguard of the Lord's work.
6. A nose like the tower of Lebanon speaks of its height and sharpness; today there are too many Christians with a disfigured, or flat, nose, which signifies the lack of Christ as the sensing ability in our service to God and disqualifies us from the priesthood—S. S. 7:4; Lev. 21:18 (see also ASV 1901).
7. Being disqualified from the priesthood because of a defect signifies that anyone who is deficient in Christ is not able to minister Christ as food to God—vv. 17-21.

G. The Spirit reviews her beauty in her thoughts and intentions (head), which are strong for God (Carmel—cf. 1 Kings 18:19-39), and in her submission and obedience for her consecration (locks of her head—cf. Num. 6:5a), which are for the glory of God (purple) and capture (fetter) her Beloved, who is the King (S. S. 7:5).

III. "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; / Let us lodge in the villages. / Let us rise up early for the vineyards; / Let us see if the vine has budded, / If the blossom is open, / If the pomegranates are in bloom; / There I will give you my love"—vv. 11-12:

A. "Let us lodge in the villages"—*villages* is plural; she has fully taken on the sojourning nature of the Lord that is not confined to one place, but that is from one village to another; she follows the Lord and seeks after lost sheep and wounded ones.

B. Christ's lover wants to carry out with her Beloved the work that is for the entire world (fields) by sojourning from one place to another (lodging in the villages); this indicates that she is not sectarian in carrying out the Lord's work; she keeps the work open so that others can come to sojourn there and she can go to sojourn elsewhere; this is to keep the one work in one Body.

C. *Early* shows her diligence in the Lord's work; the work in the early morning is indispensable; laziness is not a characteristic of the Lord's life; only those who are truly spiritual can be diligent; the difference between diligence and laziness lies in the use of time—Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5.

D. To share in the work of the Lord is not merely to work for the Lord but to work together with the Lord (1 Cor. 3:9a; 2 Cor. 6:1a); to work with the Lord we need the maturity in life, we need to be one with the Lord, and our work must be for His Body.

E. The Shulammite works as Solomon's counterpart, taking care of all the vineyards (S. S. 8:11), the churches and the believers on the whole earth; this indicates that our work should be for the Body, not just one city.

F. We must have a work that is for the entire world; this is what Paul did by establishing local churches and then working to bring them into the blending life of the entire Body of Christ for their full realization of the Body of Christ—Rom. 16:1-27; 1 Cor. 12:24-25a.

G. She and her Beloved work diligently in the churches (vineyards) for other believers to bud, blossom, and bloom; in the midst of the Lord's work, the lover of the Lord says, "There I will give You my love"—cf. S. S. 7:12.

H. If we would work together with the Beloved, we should express our love for Him in the place of His work; how wonderful this is!—Mark 12:30.

IV. The first works are works that issue from and express the first love (Rev. 2:4-5); when we are filled with the first love of the Lord (v. 4), giving Him the first place in all things (Col. 1:18b), everything we do issues from and expresses our love for Him (John 21:15-17; Eph. 4:16; 2 Cor. 5:14-15, 20):

A. At the beginning of a believer's work, he has to be delivered from the vanity of his former and outward work—he has done only what man has entrusted to him but not what God ordained for him—S. S. 1:6b-8.

B. When a believer is delivered from the self, his heart is liberated from his individualistic work to the work of the Lord, and the condition of every saint and even of the most immature believer has become his interest and the object of his concern.

C. Now the Lord's loving seeker is able to relate the Lord's work to the Lord Himself, and she can make her work an expression of her love to Him.

D. All her labor is a "labor of love" (1 Thes. 1:3) that issues from the love of God, which has been poured out in her heart (1 John 4:19; Rom. 5:5).

V. "My beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"—1 Cor. 15:58:

A. Only those works that are motivated by our first love for the Lord are the gold, silver, and precious stones—3:12.

B. Our labor in the work of the Lord is not by our natural life and natural ability but by His resurrection life with His resurrection power.

C. Such labor results in the fulfilling of God's eternal economy through the preaching of Christ to sinners, the ministering of life to the saints, and the building up of the church with the experiences of the processed Triune God as gold, silver, and precious stones—v. 12.

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