

Sermon Notes

Song of Songs 2:8-9

"Christ is Near"

A Sermon Meditation Series on the Song of Songs

November 17, 2019

Introduction

- 1) Is the Lord Jesus Christ near?
- 2) In one sense, no, He is far away.
 - a) He now sits on the right hand of the Father, enthroned in heaven. Ps 110:1; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; Heb 10:12; 12:2; 1Pet 3:22; Rev 4:9; 5:7,13
 - b) Because after His resurrection on the first Easter, our Lord boldly ascended into heaven. Matt 28:1ff; John 20:1ff; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:2,9-11
 - c) Yet, because of our fallen nature, this sinful world, and God's judgment, the Lord can feel and/or be very far away. Ps 74:9; 77:2-3,7-9; 89:49; Eccl; 1Sam 3:1; 2Chr 15:3; Ezek 7:26; Amos 8:11; Mic 3:6; Luke 11:34-36; John 3:12; 1Cor 13:12; 2Pet 3:9
- 3) Yet Scripture teaches that God, especially Christ and the Holy Spirit, are very near to the saints.
- 4) This tension is wonderfully illustrated in the Song of Songs.
 - a) Have you noticed that the lovers (the man representing Christ and the woman representing the church) numerous times are very close only to be far away in the next verse?
 - i) Example: SoS 1:4 – *"The king has brought me into his chambers."*
 - ii) That could be the end of the book: Fade to black, roll credits.
 - iii) Yet three verses latter the woman asks, *"Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where do you pasture your flock"?* – SoS 1:7
 - b) Because of this, modern scholars believe the Song is a collection of poems glued together. (Though no two agree on where a new poem begins or ends.)
 - c) Obviously God intended us to have the complete book as one Song. (All ancient copies of the Song contain only one book without division.)
 - d) Pastor Doug believes because the SoS is a work of art, it is kind of like a stream of consciousness dream.
 - i) On an emotional/experience level it makes perfect sense, but not on a rational level.
 - ii) Like a dream that seems so realistic until when awake you try to describe it.
 - iii) This dream like quality happens throughout the Song; for example:
 - They're together and then suddenly and dramatically not. SoS 1:4,7; 3:2-3; 5:6-8
 - The man is at the same time a king and a shepherd. SoS 1:4,7
 - They're in the king's chamber and in a garden. SoS 1:12,17
This typifies our walk with Christ: Sometimes He feels very close. Sometimes He feels very far away.

Literal Reading of Song of Songs 2:8-9

- 1) First, our standard warning about reading this most sublime of all songs:
 - a) Reading the Song requires maturity.
 - b) Only book in the Bible we read as an allegory and not literally.
 - i) It is not really an earthy love poem between a man and a woman.
 - ii) But really about the love between Christ (the man) and His bride (the church).
 - iii) A juvenile mind will not profit from reading this book.
 - c) This isn't a book of doctrine but a means of theological meditation:
To muse on a great work of art.
 - d) This requires biblical theological maturity to have solid orthodox parameters, lest one's meditation become heretical.
 - e) Finally, the book begins with the woman already in love with her beloved, thus assumes the reader already has faith in Christ.
- 2) The woman first exclaims, "Listen!" The grammar emphasizes excitement and an element of surprise.
- 3) She is so excited because she sees her beloved, who is coming toward her like a gazelle, or a young stag, bounding/leaping over the mountains and hills.
 - a) The image of a gazelle is one of beauty, virility, grace and strength, without violence (like a lion). 2Sam 2:18; 1Chr 12:8; Prov 6:5; SoS 2:17; 3:5; 4:5; 8:14; Is 35:6
 - b) To have the grace and power, like a gazelle/deer, is a gift from God. Ps 18:29,33; Hab 3:19
 - c) The hills/mountains can give a sense of protection and security. Ps 121:1; 125:2
- 4) The woman then exclaims, "Behold!"
 - a) Her beloved is now very close: on the other side of her wall.
 - b) In a very beautiful, romantic scene she sees him looking through the window, peering through the lattice at his beloved.

Allegorical Reading of Song of Songs 2:8-9

- 1) So is the Lord Jesus close?
- 2) For the Christian, the answer is emphatically "Yes!"
- 3) Because Christ has already come.
 - a) The final revelation of God's Word; the incarnation of the Son of God.

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" - Gal 4:4-6
 - b) This is the first Christmas, two thousand years ago.
 - c) There is nothing else we need than God becoming human to die for our sins. Heb 1:1-2; 9:26
1Pet 1:20-21
 - d) Yes, we look forward to Christ's second and final advent at the end of the age. Rev 22:7,20

- e) However, Christ is in heaven right now and actively loving us.
- 4) The Bible puts a lot of focus on what Christ is doing for us. As if He is running toward us like a gazelle or a young stag, bounding over the mountains.
- 5) Christ is in heaven, at the right hand of the Father; Christ is actively interceding for us. Rom 8:34;
Heb 4:16; 7:19,25; 9:24; 10:21-25
- a) That sounds so beautiful but what does it actually mean?
- b) Our Westminster Larger Catechism, Q#55, does an amazing job explaining this.
- i) As the perfect God-man who represents all the saints, and is our federal/covenant head whom we are in, He is placed at the highest favor with God with all joy, glory and power given to Him and to us, because Ps 16:11; John 17:5;
Acts 2:28; Rom 5:14;
Eph 1:22;
Phil 2:9;
- ii) He is gathering and defending His church. Ps 110
Subduing Her enemies Rom 8:34
Providing ministers of the Word for the saints. Eph 4:10-12
Giving the saints all sorts of spiritual gifts and graces.
- c) Because of these graces, *“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* - Heb 4:16
- 6) It is to our advantage that Christ is now in heaven, because from there He and the Father are sending the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and gives us faith, encouragement and produces in us love, causing good works. John 14:3,17-20,23,28;
John 16:7
- a) We (the church) have been set apart and are being grown into a Temple of the Holy Spirit that the world may know that we are loved by God. John 17:23
Eph 2:22
1Pet 3:15
- b) Because Christ dwells in us, by His Spirit through faith, we will be grounded in love causing us to daily die to sin and live for Christ. Rom 8:9-10;
Eph 3:16-19;
1John 3:24
- 7) Christ is near, very near!
- a) Let us all proclaim, *“Listen! My beloved! Behold, he is coming . . . Behold, he is standing behind our wall, He is looking through the windows, He is peering through the lattice.”* - SoS 2:8-9
- i) Because Christ proclaims to the church, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”* - Rev 3:20
- ii) This is depicted in our church by our largest stain glass window.
- b) This proclamation of “Behold!” is an act of worship and evangelism.
- i) The central act of worship is the ministry of the Word by pastors to evangelize the saints on Sunday morning, through preaching and the sacraments. John 21:15-17;
1Cor 11:23-26;
1Tim 4:13; 2Tim 4:1-5
- ii) We as the church proclaim this together through prayer and song. Matt 6:9-10;
Eph 5:19-21; Col 3:15-17
- iii) As a testimony to the world. Matt 28:18-30
- c) Christ is near by the profession of faith from biblical preaching of the Gospel of His work of the cross. Rom 10:8-9;
Eph 2:13,17

d) The working out of this faith in worship and our daily walk following after Christ is a proclamation that Christ is near.

9) But some might say, I don't feel Christ is near.

a) Okay, but notice that the focus of all the texts cited above are about faith working out in love, not your feelings.

i) Do you know, agree, and trust that Christ alone is your Savior?
(This assumes you realize you need saving from the Father's wrath.)

ii) Are you "willing God's good according to His Law"?
(The simple definition of love, such as coming to church on Sunday.)

iii) Are you willing your neighbor's good, especially your fellow brothers and sisters, according to God's Law?

iv) If so, God is near; those virtues are only by God's grace.
And faith, hope & love are acts of the mind controlling
the will, not emotions.

1Cor 13

v) There is no personality requirement in Scripture. Being very emotional or very stoic is fine, as long as you have faith, hope and love in Christ.

b) Though having feelings that God's love is in you is not wrong, there are strengths and dangers in feeling, or not feeling, that Christ is far away and/or near.

i) If you feel Christ is near . . .

- That can give hope, joy and a warm sense of comfort, praise God!
- Also, it can be an idol where you make your feelings triumphant over God's revelation of His Law and Gospel. If you're getting your theology from your feelings you are not loving God.

ii) If you don't feel Christ is near . . .

- That could lead to despair or rejection of Christ.
Especially if you don't understand or believe in the Gospel.
Or living in sinful rebellion. (Conviction is an act of the Spirit!)
- However, feelings aren't required; faith hope and love are.
- To remain faithful while feeling that Christ is far away is a powerful testimony that Christ's Spirit is in you!
It is a sign of a mature faith that clings to Christ alone.
Add it is a time of great growth in one's faith.

c) **Romans 8:26-39**