

Sermon Notes

Song of Songs 2:8-15

“Responding to Christ”

A Sermon Meditation Series on the Song of Songs

December 1, 2019

Introduction

- 1) What is the role of the Gospel in our sanctification?
 - a) We talked about this a lot when we went through Romans.
 - b) However, this is a critical question about which there is a lot of confusion.
 - c) It is how we live our daily lives and are being prepared and refined for heaven.
- 2) We first must define our terms:
 - a) The **Gospel**¹ is the proclamation/declaration of who we are in Christ. That His perfect righteousness has been credited to us and that we are justified (declared righteous), made holy, adopted, and redeemed solely by Christ’s work. Thus we are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone.²
 - b) **Sanctification**³ is that state that follows our justification⁴, by which we daily follow after Christ, remaining faithful, doing good works and dying to sin.
- 3) One of the greatest and most common mistakes of modern Evangelicalism is the unintentional habit of viewing the Gospel as being for unbelievers to get them “saved”
 - a) Yes, the Gospel should be proclaimed to unbelievers to secure their salvation!
 - b) However, the Gospel is the power of God by which
 Christians are empowered to pursue daily holiness,
 i.e. sanctification.

Rom 1:16-17; 2Cor 13:4;
 1Cor 1:18, 23-24, 30; 2:5;
 2Tim 1:8; 1Pet 1:3-5
- 4) One of the best biblical texts that illustrates this is the Song of Songs 2:8-15.

¹ Pastor Doug’s favorite section of Scripture to quickly define the Gospel is Romans 1:1b-5a,16-17 – “*the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace . . . For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’”*”

² Matt 16:16-17; John 6:28-29; Acts 8:22; 13:39; 15:11; 16:14; Rom 1:16-17; 3:20-21,24,28; 10:3-4; Gal 2:16; 3:11; Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; 3:9; 2Tim 1:9; 2:25; Heb 12:2; 1Pet 1:5.

³ See Romans 6:10-13,22-23 – “*For the death that He (Christ) died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God . . . But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*”

⁴ The Bible describes “sanctification” in two different ways:

There is “**definitive sanctification**” by which we are declared perfectly holy because we are covered by the blood of Christ and have real spiritual union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. This form of sanctification is very similar to justification (when we are declared righteous when we first believe in Christ.) (Acts 20:32; 1Cor 1:2; 6:11; Heb 2:11; 10:10,14)

Then there is “**progressive, or experiential, sanctification**” which is the working out of holiness in our lives where we daily die to sin and live for Christ. This form of sanctification is different from justification (since justification is instantaneous and this sanctification is progressive); however, sanctification will always be the byproduct of true justification, though never its cause. (Rom 6:19,22; 1Thes 4:3-4,7; 5:23; Heb 12:14; 1Pet 3:15)

Literal Reading of the Song of Songs 2:8-15

- 1) As always, first our warning about how to read this most sublime song.
 - 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:
Like musing 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) In SoS 2:8-9 the woman exclaims, "Listen!" The grammar emphasizes excitement and an element of surprise. SoS 2:8-9
 - a) 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.
 - i) 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
 - ii) The hills/mountains can give a sense of protection and security. Ps 121:1; 125:2
 - b) The woman then exclaims, "Behold!"
 - i) Her beloved is now very close: On the other side of her wall.
 - ii) In a very beautiful, romantic scene she sees him looking through the window, peering through the lattice at his beloved.

- 3) Her lover responds to her attention. SoS 2:10
 - a) He states, "*Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along.*"
 - b) Why?
 - i) The winter has passed and the rain is over and gone. SoS 2:11
 - Winter in Palestine (Oct-April) is the only real time for rain.
 - So this is probably the month of May.
 - ii) The flowers have already appeared. SoS 2:12
 - iii) It's the time "*for the pruning of vines*".
 - Some verses translate this as "*the time of singing has come.*" (ESV)
 - This is probably the better translation since pruning happens in the late summer. (July-August)
 - iv) The turtledove is now heard.

These birds return in April to herald the start of Spring. Jer 8:7
 - v) The figs on the fig tree are now ripe. SoS 2:13a; Matt 24:32; Mark 13:28
 - vi) The vines are in blossom and are giving off their fragrance. SoS 7:12

- c) All this means springtime has started; A time of new life and for love.
- d) Again the man states, *“Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along!”* SoS 2:13b
- 3) He then calls her by a pet/romantic name “my dove.” SoS 2:14
- a) For she is like a dove hid in the rocks.
- b) Thus he beckons to see her form and hear her voice.
- c) Because he finds her voice sweet and form lovely.
- 4) Our final verse, SoS 2:15, is much debated.
- a) SoS 2:15 – *“Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, while our vineyards are in blossom.”*
- b) It is not clear who is speaking: Either the man, or the woman, or both of them together, or the chorus of maidens.
- c) The overall meaning of the text is clear: There is a danger to their relationship.
- i) The foxes are destroying the vineyards and “their” vineyards are in blossom.
- ii) The word here for “foxes” (*shuw‘al*) could be translated as “jackals.”
- These are not cute and cuddly pets.
 - But unclean and dangerous creatures that represent desolation. Judg 15:4; Neh 4:3; Ps 63:10;
Lam 5:18; Ezek 13:4

An Allegorical Reading of the Song of Songs 2:8-15

- 1) This text, like all of the Song of Songs, assumes we (the church, the woman) are a true believer.
- a) We already have saving faith in Christ that knows, agrees, and daily trusts in our Savior, Lord and God.
- b) That this faith is already producing hope and love in and to Him.
- 2) The true believer desires Christ.
- a) To be with Him at heaven and His return at the end of the age. 2Cor 5:6-8; Rev 22:20-21
- b) Also, His presence in our life now! John 14:23; Rom 8:9ff; 1John 4:13
- 3) Believers are excited that Christ is dramatically coming near to us and is very close. SoS 2:8-9
- a) He responds to our excitement by saying, *“Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along.”* – SoS 2:10b
- b) We are altogether beautiful in God’s sight solely because of what the Son has done for us!
This is the Gospel!
- c) We are not only justified, adopted, declared holy, but Christ beckons us to follow after Him.
- d) Please note: This following is rooted in His total love for us!
- 4) This following is made so much more sweet because the bleakness of winter and its freezing rain has gone! SoS 2:11-13b
- a) It is a beautiful May morning!
- i) The flowers are in bloom. SoS 2:12a
- ii) The time for singing as come. SoS 2:12b
- iii) And the turtledove has returned. SoS 2:12c

- iv) The plants are giving forth their fruit and their fragrance is in the air. SoS 2:13a
- b) How blessed are we to be on the other side of the cross! Matt 13:18; John 8:56; Heb 11:13; 1Pet 1:10-12
- i) The Messiah *has* come! Matt 28:6; John 14:16-21; 16:5-16; Rom 8:26ff; Heb 1:1-3
- He *has* been incarnate, born of the virgin.
 - He *has* died for our sins!
 - He, and with His Father, *is* sending forth His Spirit to dwell in us!
 - He now reigns in heaven and intercedes for us perfectly.
- ii) We *are* now in the new covenant; One of grace and not works! Jer 31:31; Luke 22:20-21; 1Cor 11:25; 2Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8,13; 9:15; 12:24
- iii) Because the power of sin, Satan, and the world, *has* been defeated by Christ's cross. Dan 7:13-14; John 12:31-33; Rom 8:37-39; Rom 14:9; Eph 1:20-22; Phil 2:9-11; Col 2:10-15; 2Thes 2:6-12; Heb 2:14; 1Pet 3:22; Rev 12:5-17
- iv) And we now have new life in Him by the Spirit. Rom 6:4; 7:6; 2Cor 5:17
- v) Thus we walk by faith and not by sight. 2Cor 4:18; 5:7
- 5) Thus Christ beckons to His beloved people, "*Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along!*" *O my dove . . .*" SoS 2:13b-14a
- a) The saints are not precious in the sight of the world, they seem to the world to be mere birds hidden in the rocks. Matt 11:25-30; John 15:18-27
- b) But Christ beckons that He "see our form" and "hear our voice." SoS 2:14b
- i) This is the profession of faith in Christ that is expressed in works of love towards God (in worship, prayer, confession, profession, etc.), in and to Christ's church and to our neighbors.
- ii) Even our most feeble good works are precious in God's sight, because it has been covered by the blood of Christ. Rom 8:26; Heb 9:12-14
- iii) And by Christ's blood, and His alone, our voice is sweet to God and our form lovely.
- 6) But there is danger, because the world is going to hell, and is corrupting, because "*the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*" – 1Pet 5:8
- a) Therefore it is declared, "*Catch the jackals for us, the young jackals that are ruining the vineyards, while our vineyards are in blossom.*"
- b) But who is speaking? (The man, the woman, the chorus?) All work.
- i) Christ calls us to live lives of holiness, to die to sin and live for Him! John 14:16-21
- ii) We implore that Christ help us to flee sin and remain faithful. Mark 9:24; Rom 7:23-25
- iii) The church, Christ's spiritual body on earth, has the duty and authority to command the saints to repent and do good works. Matt 18:15-20; 2Tim 4:1-5
- 7) This call to holiness, to sanctification, must be rooted in the Gospel, however. Rom 5:1ff
- a) To keep Christ and the Gospel ever before your eyes.
- b) The more you daily are dependent on Christ alone, the more you will be a faithful, hopeful and loving Christian!
- c) Praise Christ that He speaks the Gospel to us in His Word. Luke 20:20; 1Cor 11:26