Session 14 – The Bridal Seal of Mature Love 8:5-7

Who is that coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved? Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labour with you; there she who bore you was in labour. [6] Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. [7] Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Song 8:5-7 summarizes the journey and destination of the Bride who cultivated a leaning heart while becoming victorious in love and describes the pinnacle of our experience in the love of God. The theme of the Song is the King sealing the heart of His Bride with His fiery love. The Bride's life vision (1:4) is fulfilled as the King sealed her heart with His fiery love (8:5-7). The Song is an eight-chapter love song showing how love developed between the Bride and King. Her journey began with a cry for the kisses of God's Word (1:2) and ended with a seal of love. This passage ends the progression of holy passion as the Bride lives victorious in mature love.

2. The Spirit's first agenda is to establish the first commandment in first place in the Church. The command to love God with all our heart does not begin with us. It is one expression of the ultimate reality of the kingdom that existed long before the creation of the world, namely, God's heart burning with perfect love within the fellowship of the three persons of the Trinity. From eternity past, God has loved God with all of His heart. The Father loved the Son, Jesus loved the Spirit, etc. God is fully satisfied in the fellowship within the Godhead. We understand the first commandment best by seeing it in its eternal context of the fellowship in the Godhead, rather than seeing it as one aspect of kingdom lifestyle.

3. Our greatest destiny is to participate in the burning love in the family dynamics of the Trinity. Jesus declared that He loves the redeemed with the same intensity with which His Father loves Him (Jn. 15:9). He said that the Father loves the redeemed with this same intensity (Jn. 17:23).

John. 15:9 [9] "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."

4. We must not settle only for the early stages of experiencing God's love where Jesus reveals Himself to us as **Saviour** (who freely forgives us), as **Provider** (who blesses our circumstances), and the **Lord of Hos**ts or **Captain of the armies of heaven** (who leads us in ministry in His war against darkness). He also wants us to know Him as the **Bridegroom King** who loves us with all His heart and mind.

B. COMING UP IN VICTORY

Who is that coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved?

The Holy Spirit asks a rhetorical question that affirms the identity and victory of the Bride at the end of the age. There are several parts to this question:

1. Who is this coming up from the wilderness? The question is not an inquiry of uncertainty, but rather an exclamation of wonder at the beauty and maturity of the victorious Bride. This is the Bride at the end of the age, complete in her obedience and beautiful in her confidence in the Bridegroom. The Holy Spirit sees that

she has persevered through the journey in the wilderness, through the strenuous tests of the earthly qualification process. While the Body of Christ on earth has not yet reached this place, the Holy Spirit is fully confident in the power of Jesus to bring us to fullness. Therefore, He can declare these things with prophetic certainty rooted in the knowledge of Christ's love and power. The effect of this declaration is not to produce an undisciplined, take-it-for-granted lifestyle, but to encourage us to embrace the process with a whole heart, knowing that the commitment will have its desired result – intimacy and authority. This enables us to lay hold of the grace that is available to us and which will enable us to come forth in glory.

1 Cor.15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me

2. The Bride has overcome all obstacles, and embraced the process of qualification with endurance. The Bride is ascending, not descending. She did not quit, nor did she become lazy in the journey. Even though she had moments of fear leading to compromise (see 2:8-10), she overcame through the Bridegroom's love, and conquered the obstacles. In Chapter 3:6 the same question was asked concerning the Bridegroom, ascending through His earthly test, preparing the way for the Bride to follow. Here, she is the object of the same declaration, indicating that she has now walked the path appointed to her, embracing her cross of discipleship, and emerging as victorious and mature. The ultimate fulfilment of this "coming up" will be our place in the 2nd Coming procession, when Jesus marches through the lands with us at His side, ascending to Jerusalem to take His place as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Rev 19:11-16 [11] Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. [12] His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.[13] He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. [14] And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. [15] From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. [16] On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

3. The Bride has learned the joy and safety of voluntary weakness: she is leaning on her Beloved. The Bride has reaffirmed her confidence in the King's leadership, His observable activity as well as His hidden activity (see 8:3). Because she trusts His sovereign goodness, she is leaning on Him at all times in voluntary weakness. One element of mankind's fall from grace in Genesis 3 is the fleshly determination to be independent, to lean upon one's own strength, or the resources of the world's system. The Bride of Christ will be weaned from the world's system until her only resource is Jesus Himself. We must learn to embrace the circumstances that God uses to tear us away from dependency on the wrong sources of strength.

4. There are several ways that we can learn to lean on Jesus, our Beloved
    a. **For salvation**- she trusted in His work on the cross, not in her own deeds.

    b. **For attaining victory** - leaning involves looking to her present-tense relationship with the Holy Spirit as her source of power. She does not trust her discipline, nor in her religious rules. Neither does she

look to her past victories, or her past defeats. She won't trust in her own rules or religious regulations. What she trusts in is the active present-tense fellowship with the Holy Spirit. That is the source of her power. She leans on Him in humility. This leaning involves the reaching of our heart to the person of the Holy Spirit. There is no self-sufficiency, no trust placed in her own heart. She won't even lean on her past victories. She has a deep revelation of her own inadequacy and sinfulness. She does not trust her discipline.

c. **For wholeness** - She has laid down the self-protecting behaviour that "shields" her heart from risks and conflicts. She depends upon Him with genuine vulnerability. He is working in our lives to bring us to a discovery of our own inadequacies.

d. **For direction** - in God's plan the ordering of our steps takes divine intervention to help circumstances line up correctly. She understands that she does not have the wisdom or power to arrange her own life. It takes a sovereign King who has all knowledge of the future and power over all circumstances. She is no longer leaning upon her own understanding (Prov. 3:5).

e. **For provision** - the Lord arranges circumstances in a way that He alone is seen as her source of supply. She has the confidence to take a nap in the boat in the midst of a storm, because she has confidence in the provision of God.

5. Learning to lean on the Beloved means submitting to growing in voluntary weakness Matthew 6:1-17 speaks of ***when you give . . . when you pray . . . when you fast . . .*** (the fasted lifestyle)

   a. Extravagant giving places us in a posture of weakness with regard to financial security, and sets us squarely in the hands of God as our resource (see Proverbs 19:17; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

   b. Extravagant prayer places us in a posture of weakness with regard to available time that could be used to further one's own agenda (see Luke 10:38-42; 18:1-6)

   c. Extravagant fasting places us in a posture of weakness with regard to physical strength, causing us to depend upon the grace of God to a greater degree (see Matthew 4:1-11).

Those who do not learn voluntary weakness will have to learn to lean in the context of forced dependency.

C. JESUS REMINDS THE BRIDE OF HIS HELP IN HER PAST JOURNEY

Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labour with you; there she who bore you was in labour.

1. The Holy Spirit awakens us and brings us to a point of response to His initiative. The apple tree speaks of a place of refreshing, the encounter where the Bride received a life-changing revelation of His love.

2. God uses our spiritual mother, the Church, to bring us to birth. We are all the product of the work of the Holy Spirit through the Body of Christ through the years. This is why it is important that we bless the Body of

Christ, pray for her, and do not speak evil of her, even when we are addressing points of weakness and failure. God has used His Church in both positive and negative ways to form our lives. We are given opportunity to exercise all the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit in our dealings with God's people. We learn to forgive and to overcome bitterness, we learn to give thanks to God and bless those who have nourished and strengthened us in faith.

3. The Holy Spirit is reminding us here that no one follows Jesus in isolation, but as part of a great company of the redeemed, and we are to be thankful for that heritage.

D. SEALED WITH FIERY LOVE

[6] Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. [7] Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.

1. Jesus is the speaker here, inviting the Shulamite to set Him upon her heart as the seal of divine love. He is calling her to receive the impartation of His love so that she will be able to stand in all the circumstances that she will face along the journey. The King's seal was the best insurance policy possible in that culture. It meant that the full weight of the King's authority was behind that document, and that all the resources of the King were available to ensure that the contents would be fulfilled.

2. Jesus Himself is the seal that is upon our hearts, in the person of His Holy Spirit.

Eph. 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

3. The presence of Christ's seal, the Holy Spirit, empowers us to receive His strength, to grow in love, and to endure all the strategies of the enemy.
    a. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to receive the love of God as His children.

Rom. 8:14-16 ***For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. [15] For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the <u>Spirit of adoption</u> as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" [16] <u>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God</u>,***

    b. By the strength of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to grow in the knowledge of the love of Christ. The experiential knowledge of His love is like a flame of fire that burns in our hearts, creating holy desire for Jesus and for the presence of His Spirit.

Eph 3:16–19 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, [17] that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and

length and depth and height— [19] to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

c. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we overcome and defeat all the strategies of the enemy as he seeks to defeat us.

Ephesians 6:10–11 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. [11] Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

4. ***Strong as death:*** God's love in us is as strong or comprehensive as death. Death claims everything in the natural realm. Its grasp is comprehensive. Nothing in the natural order escapes the power of death. God's love will not allow any areas of darkness to escape its grasp.

5. ***Jealousy:*** God is a consuming fire and desires to impart His fire into our hearts. Jesus' jealous love is as comprehensive in its demands as both death and the grave are. He wants all of our heart. We pray, "Lord we want more of You." Then Jesus responds by saying, "I want more of you."

Exod. 34:14 For the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God…

6. ***Fierce as the grave:*** God's jealous love is "fierce" or as demanding as the grave. In other words, God's love will not allow any areas of brokenness in our lives to escape its grasp. God's love poured in our heart will conquer every area of sin that we continually yield to Him.

7. ***Flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord:*** Its flames of fire are a most vehement or powerful flame. The anointing to love God is the most powerful gift that the Spirit imparts to a believer's heart. The 120 believers in the upper room received a token of the baptism of God's fiery love (Acts 2:3).

Rom. 5:5 The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit…

Lk. 3:16 He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Acts 2:3 There appeared to them…tongues, as of fire, and sat upon each of them.

8. ***Many waters*** cannot quench this love. This metaphor speaks of the daily strategies of the evil one to defeat us on a daily basis. There are at least five types of "waters" that the enemy uses to try to quench the love that burns in us:
   a. He declares that even the negative waters of <u>disappointment</u> like sickness, failure, cannot quench this flame. We can overcome all of these things that would cause our hearts be quenched by disappointments.

   b. The second types of quenching water are the <u>cares of this world</u> and the deceitfulness of riches (Mk. 4:19).

c. The third type of quenching water is accusation and condemnation from the enemy as we experience our own failure in sin.

d. The fourth types of quenching waters are temptations. Joseph felt the waters of temptation when Potiphar's wife said, "come lie with me." But the fire of God was kindled in his heart and the waters of immorality couldn't put it out. There is a fire that keeps us loyal to God in the face of the sinful pleasures.

e. The fifth types of quenching waters are prosperity. The enemy uses prosperity and pleasure on one hand and then poverty and shame on the other to quench the impartation of the love of God.

9. We are partners with the Holy Spirit in setting and receiving His seal upon our hearts. He makes all things available, takes all the initiative, and releases everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). We respond by spending time with Jesus, setting our hearts to love Him, fixing our minds on His truths, refusing old patterns of belief and action, so that we might live in the ongoing power and victory of His presence.

E. THE REWARD OF LOVE IS FOUND IN POSSESSING THE ABILITY TO LOVE (8:7)

If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised

1. The highest reward of true love is found in possessing the ability to love more. The anointing to receive and express God's love is our greatest reward. Those who are wealthy in love do not look at price tags. No sacrifice is comparable to what He gives us in His love. Paul spoke of this love that will pay any price. Paul laid down his status, prestige, honor, and open doors of opportunity. He laid down his open doors of opportunity.

Phil. 3:8 I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ…for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ…

2. We are the only one who can give God all our love. God will not force us to love Him. It is our gift to Him that we give voluntarily as we cooperate with the Spirit's work in our life.

3. Anybody can quit, except a person in love. When we are tempted to quit, the obstacle in our path is that we love God. God is raising up a people who will not quit. People quit because they do not have all the information. When we are fully informed, then we no longer desire the recognition that we did something extraordinary by obeying God with zeal. We are so filled with gratitude and love when we see the whole story, instead seeking special recognition for extravagant commitment.

F. JESUS THE CONSUMING FIRE

1. This is the final revelation of Jesus in the book – the reality that He is the all-consuming Fire of God, the passionate lover who consumes our very soul with His burning love. Like the disciples on the road to

Emmaus (Luke 24) when He speaks to our hearts the truth of His life, love and purposes our hearts are ignited and we see things as they truly are.

Luke 24:32 Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?

2. The touch of His consuming fire of love burns with a violent flame that invigorates and heals, gives vision and faith, satisfies longings and calls us to realise the destiny in our lives, to know why we were created in the first place.

3. We are made for the exhilaration of passion, and we will search for the reality of that exalted place until we find it. We need to come to understand that only in His presence is the longing for passion fulfilled in a holy and wondrous way.