

THE KING OF LOVE

John 15:9-17—Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another.

1 John 4:7-16—Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loves us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Song of Solomon 1:1-4, 12-2:6—The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's. May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. For your love is better than wine. Your oils have a pleasing fragrance, your name is like ointment poured forth; therefore the maidens love you. Draw me after you and let us run together! The king has brought me into his chambers. We will rejoice in you and be glad; we will extol your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you...While the king was at his table, my perfume gave forth its fragrance. My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh which lies all night between my breasts. My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi. How beautiful you are my darling, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves. How handsome you are, my beloved, and so pleasant! Indeed, our couch is luxuriant! The beams of our houses are cedars, our rafters, cypresses. I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys. Like a lily among the thorns, so is my darling among the maidens. Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. In his shade I took great delight and sat down, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He has brought me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love. Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, because I am lovesick. Let his left hand be under my head and his right hand embrace me.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Our Father, we come to You and thank You so much for Your Son the Messiah, the King of glory, our Lord, the friend of sinners, the lover of little children. In so many ways we have seen and touched You as You have drawn near to us by Your mercy and through the Holy Spirit. Once again we come for a final session and ask that You would quicken us—mind, soul, body, spirit—that we could receive the things of God and have revealed to us that which You desire to reveal. We place this into the hands of the Holy Spirit, the divine Teacher, who writes Christ into our hearts and transforms us from glory to glory. We thank You for these precious times we have had together, and do continue to work in our hearts even as we are together in this last hour. We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

THE KING COMES TO EARTH TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM

We know from the Scriptures that there is a transcendent throne above all time and space that is full of glory. It beams with emerald, gold, and white light as living ones circle over the top saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory." This throne has been there from before the foundation of the world, and we listened to a divine council there in which the question was asked: "Whom shall we send? Who will go for us?" Long before Isaiah was ever born, the eternal Son of God said: "Here am I, send Me."

In the fullness of time, this King of glory took off His raiment of glory, and standing before all those who were bowed before the throne, He descended to the earth becoming not only a secret King but a servant King. He came and proclaimed good news to a few seeking people: "The King and the kingdom of God had drawn nigh." The people were excited, and the land exploded with life as this Anointed One walked through Galilee and performed miracles, spoke in the light, redeemed, recovered, and repaired that which was broken and that which was lost. He had come to save sinners. What a wonderful King this was, but He was only seen as the King by revelation, and that only to a few. It was finally through the death of this King that the kingdom opened up to us all. And praise God, since that time, after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended on high to the right hand of the Father as the King in glory once again, the mystery of God was revealed.

God loved the world, and that is a mystery. Who can understand it? But this is the proof that God loved the world. He sent His Son to the earth that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but be translated from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son. What a tremendous King this is! We know that since that time, multitudes have been transferred into this kingdom of the Son of the Father's love and experienced the grace, the forgiveness, the freedom, the healing in their lives, the peace and the love of the Father.

John speaks to the little children in his letter and says, "Behold, what mannner of love the Father has given unto us that we should be His children and even be called the children of God." What wonderful love we have experienced from the Father! And the Holy Spirit has been given to us, within us, upon us, and around us in order to transform us, prepare us, and bring us from glory to glory until we can stand in that kingdom as sons of glory with the King Himself, the Messiah, Jesus Christ our Lord. And we have heard this plan being unfolded to us this week, this great picture of destiny, the parousia, and the soon fulfillment of all these things that have been recorded in the gospels of the kingdom of God.

My thought has been to share the need for these things to be revealed to our hearts. The King of glory needs to be revealed to our hearts. The more clearly we see how glorious our King is, the more our devotion, submission and service are marked by His character. I also tried to share the fact, that though we know this phrase so well—Jesus is the Christ—we need a revelation of the Christ in such a living way that the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon us. It is His very personal anointing upon each one and upon the church for specific commissions and callings. Jesus the Anointed One and Jesus the Anointing One has come to pour out His Spirit upon us and make us effectual servants in the kingdom.

JESUS DISCLOSES HIMSELF TO THOSE WHO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS

There is another revelation of the King I would like to share now. We are introduced to it by the disciple whom Jesus loved—John. The disciple whom Jesus loved recalls some very intimate conversations that Jesus had with His disciples just before He went to Calvary, and he records these uniquely in his Gospel. He says in John 14:21: “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” What a wonderful promise this is for those who keep His commandments.

Again we read in verse 23: “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.’” Jesus begins to share some intimate things with His disciples. We know that the Father’s love is impartial. He loves *all* His children. He gives us all grace, grants us forgiveness, and holds us in His hand. We know the Father’s love. He loves all equally. And there is no child of God who can say in truth, “Our Father has neglected me.” No, the Father’s love is known by us. John says in I John 2: “Little children I am writing to you because you know the Father. And little children I am writing to you because you know your sins have been forgiven” (vv. 12-13). All the children of God enter into the Father’s love.

But there is something further for those who would press on. There is something more and deeper in this intimacy that comes about when we abide in His love and keep His commandments.

In John 15 Jesus again shares some very precious and intimate words regarding this abiding. Sometimes Christians think this is automatic—I abide in Christ and Christ abides in me. That is certainly our position in Christ Jesus, but here in chapter 15 he is talking about a relationship that remains in Christ, keeps His commandments and listens to His voice. We remember the words in chapter 15:9: “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.”

BECOMING THE FRIEND OF JESUS

Again in verse 14-15: “You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves.” Let’s remember that this word *slave* is “bondslave” and a bondslave is not just a bondslave; he is one who is a loving bondslave. “I know you came to Me of your own free will and gave yourself to Me; you bowed in service before Me, so I no longer call you My beloved bondservants; now I bring you into a friendship, and I declare to you things that the Father has spoken to Me because you are My friends.” We might think this is a

paradox, but it is not. God the Father loves all His children, but there are those whom Jesus loves, even as John, who writes this passage. There are those who have become His friends.

Let's make a distinction here. When we sing the gospel song, "What a Friend we have in Jesus," it is absolutely correct, absolutely wonderful, and absolutely true: we have a friend in Jesus. But John 15 is talking about something else: are we His friends? Can Jesus say, "What a friend I have in you"? That's a different song. Indeed, Jesus is our friend and we count on it many times, but this is talking about us being His friends. Now His friends have gone deeper, they have abode with Him—not coming in and out, in and out. And His friends have listened to Him, kept His commandments, and not just said: "I will think about it, Lord. I will come back later. Give it to me again. Oh yes, I forgot. Well, I will think about it." No, these are ones who have gone to a deeper level, and they are bondslaves, but now friends, and some things begin opening to His friends.

THE KING IS A LOVER

I want to get to the point of the revelation that I believe is so mysterious and deep. Even as I speak it, it will not be seen except by those who know. Those who have given their hearts to the Lord, who are His loving free-will bondslaves, who have abode with Him and listened to Him, pressed into Him, desired to know Him, and have a heart after Him, the day comes when He comes to you as one of His friends and kisses you on the mouth. It happens so suddenly. You are struck and are lovesick as something within is opened to you that you never realized before. You had known the love of the Father, but had never known the love of the Lover.

To our delight it turns out the King is a lover. We are so hesitant to say that and with good reason because today the term lover means everything wrong. But how else can we say it? This King is a true lover, and one of such passion, strength, jealousy, joy, aggressiveness, delightfulness, and intimacy that we cannot easily talk about it. But it is there, and it happens. It captures, and it is mysterious. We dare not even talk much about it because it would seem presumptive. Who can say, "Hey, I have been kissed by Jesus"? It just sounds like something is exaggerated. It is too intimate. Or maybe we feel it is something that we could never initiate, but the truth is, He initiates it, and there is nothing you can do except receive the kisses on your mouth.

THE SHULAMMITE FALLS IN LOVE

This picture that we have in the Song of Solomon is a great mystery. This is about Solomon and a Shulammitte woman, which being interpreted is a "nobody." It is a tremendous mystery because this nobody and the greatest king upon the earth are brought together.

When we think of a kingdom, of course, we think of all those outward things that make for pomp, ceremony, authority, power, armies, a courtroom, a throne, emissaries, people bowing down, victories, prosperity, and gold upon gold; all of which Solomon possessed. He was a glorious king. Solomon also had the real wealth of wisdom and fear of the Lord, as well as what he had accumulated in his lifetime. What a kingdom this was!

These outer things are how we think of kingdom, and even though Jesus was a hidden King when He was on earth, we could see his kingdom. We saw authority and purpose; we

saw Him moving with power as things were happening. We saw the enemy bound and powerful miracles taking place from this King. And now we are in His kingdom.

What do you think of when you hear the word kingdom? Do you think of bearing the cross, serving the Lord, using His authority to bind and loose, using the keys of the kingdom, praying and worshipping, standing our ground and saying, "Jesus is Lord here upon this earth," and we are a testimony to that. The kingdom has its violence. There is service and real battles there. There is also a hiddenness and a heavenliness in this kingdom. We talk about the kingdom and think of these kinds of things; and we know that at the center of the kingdom for everybody there is a cross. Therefore, there is persecution, suffering, and sacrifice in this kingdom.

THE SHULAMMITE'S VISION OF THE KINGDOM

Now let me ask a simple question: What did the kingdom look like to the Shulammite woman? Or what did Solomon's kingdom look like to the Shulammite woman? When we look back to the Song of Solomon, we see, of course, that some great mystery has already happened, for she opens by saying, "May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine. Your oils are pleasing fragrance, your name is like purified oil; therefore, the maidens love you." She has already been kissed, and she wants more; she is in love.

We do not know the story behind this moment but we have to conclude something happened. Perhaps we can picture a young Solomon who one day left his blueprints for the building of the temple and the people who were coming to him for counseling and wisdom and rode his horse into the country where he spied this dark maiden. He went to her and looked into her eyes. He told her how beautiful and lovely she was, and with all his beautiful poetry and lovely prose snowed her royally. As she bowed and smiled up at him, he kissed her and then went away. Now he probably went back and picked up the blueprints again and all the other things one does in the kingdom. But the Shulammite had her first real vision of the kingdom, and it was Solomon, and she was in love.

Now this speaks of a great mystery we find among God's children, that in the midst of our serving, in the midst of our loving and pursuing, in the midst of our life, at a time when we least expect it, our King, this King of glory, comes down to us and speaks something into our heart that captures us. He speaks something so personal to us that it is fearful. It is beyond the imagination. You cannot make up what He would say to you. And if we are truly loved and kissed by the King, there is a secret there that you should keep. He shared His heart.

THE KING CHOSE THE SHULAMMITE—A NOBODY

Can you imagine this glorious king sharing his heart with this dark simple maiden? Can you imagine the King of glory sharing His heart with you or me? Was worthiness even an issue with her? Is that even on the table? But what she could say was this: "I am love-sick." And she could confess one thing: "He did it; I did not do it." A servant girl in the kingdom of Israel under Solomon would never take the initiative with the king and say: "What's going on, buddy?" You did not speak unless you were spoken to. You did not look up into the eyes of somebody unless that one said, "Look at me." He did it. We know he took the initiative; there is no doubt about that. He is the one who had to approach her. And she would say to

her friends: “He chose me; He came and told me: ‘You did not choose me; I chose you.’ (You remember what Jesus said to his friends back there in John 15?) And then after kissing me, you know what he did? He brought me into this banqueting room and he had a big sign up there that said: “Solomon loves Shulammite.” And he said, “Here honey, you sit down right there.” And they brought in all this wonderful food. What a feast!

THE FIRST STAGE OF LOVE FOR THE KING

We all know those three little doublets in Song of Solomon. As a result of this encounter and initial conquest, the king says, “Oh, my darling, my dove, my love. I just love you so much.” Then the Shulammite says in 2:16 as her conclusion: “My beloved is mine and I am his.”

Here she is reckless in her love. I think you can sense that because she put herself first: “My beloved is mine.” You get the feeling that she even thinks she *caught* him somehow, that she is the prize and he is the smitten suiter. But that is what Solomon let her think. She had no status at all until that day. She was neglected, belittled by her own family and made to work in places that made her dark with suntan and with hands rough from working. She had no status in herself, but suddenly, there was somebody who loved her. How could she even say that the king of kings, the glorious Solomon is the one who loved her? And even though she did not understand what he was saying as he spoke to her—overwhelmed as she was—it was as if she was a queen in full blossom, so beautiful, the picture of perfection. That is what he spoke to her. Of course, she could not believe it, but she was glad that he was blind with love. And so she took it and said, “Give me more, honey; give me more.” He could poetically describe everything, and she was lovesick. He professed his love for her in every way and showed her that he loved her. Maybe we can say that she was foolish and silly for saying, “My beloved is mine and I am his,” but she was lovesick, and he knew how insecure she was.

The Assurance of Salvation

God’s children are so insecure. They are like ones barely saved, and they wonder how the King could look upon them? And until the point is clear that the King loves you and sees you perfected and glorious, you can never believe it. The Shulammite could never have believed this. I want to ask this question: Is she you? Have you been serving God, reading the Word, praying, desiring to be His witness, trying this and that, perhaps failing or succeeding, growing in the Lord in fits and starts, and devoted to the Lord, and then He kissed you? Don’t ask me to explain what that means, but you know when you have been kissed. There is nowhere else to go. You might even want to escape your responsibility, your charge, your school, your environment, but you know there is nowhere to go but to Him. You have been kissed. What word has He been speaking to you? Have you just been rolling it all off your back in unbelief? Do you believe the Word of God? Or do you say, “No; that cannot be about me. It must be somebody else. I could never be a son in glory or a part of the bride. I will just be one who is outside gnashing my teeth.” There are a lot of Christians who say, “Please, just let me be outside gnashing my teeth. No mansion for me, just a little shack; that is all I want.”

But If the King has ever come and spoken to you of love, He does not speak in incomplete terms. He does not speak in part or say that you are only going to make it halfway. Those

are our thoughts and those are lies of the enemy. But when the King comes and kisses you, there is something that He wants to bring home to your heart forever. You are His and He is yours. Oh, He wants that issue solved, so you can say, "Jesus is mine." It has nothing to do with how perfect we have been, how good we have been, or anything like that. We just know Jesus is mine, and that is assurance of salvation.

The Moravians are very strong in this matter of assurance of their salvation. They always talked to John Wesley and said: "Now John, do you have the assurance of your salvation? Until that happens you are in and out. You are saved and doubting. You do not know where you are." But when we can say, "My beloved is mine and I am His, and his banner over me is love," then we are coming into this mystery.

THE SECOND STAGE OF LOVE FOR THE KING

The second doublet is found in chapter 6:3. Now the Shulammite has gone through some things, and she says here: "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." You notice that Solomon is in first place now. He is the subject of the sentence. He is the one who counts. "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." Thank God for that confidence. And in the events from chapters 3—5 her perspective has changed, and now Solomon comes first. When she was first love-struck, she came first. "My beloved is mine. Give me more love. Now I am my beloved's, and I am going to tell him how much I love him." Some things have happened in this period of time; there has been a series of events that have deepened that love. She has had some panic attacks when she awoke in the night and could not find him. She ran out into the street, saying, "Where is he? Where is he?" and immediately runs into him. He grabs her, hugs her, and says, "Here I am."

We find sometimes in our lives that times of separation and longing make us realize how precious His love is. Oh, what we take for granted, until he seems removed for awhile and we sense that dryness as we run around saying, "Where is He? Where is He?" And he says, "Here I am," and calms our fears. We get these panic attacks: "Oh, I don't think he loves me anymore. I have done something wrong and he does not love me anymore."

The Shulammite Begins to Value the King in a Deeper Way

We notice that Solomon never says anything negative to her. Most of her negativity is her own estimate. After these panic attacks, as she is watching, Solomon starts to be revealed in different ways. She looks and looks at him, and she starts to see his glory, his beauty, his power, and his kingdom. She starts to realize he is doing important things. This guy is big. I do not know if the Shulammite woman could truly comprehend what Solomon's real authority and responsibilities were as a king. She just knew him as a lover. Now she watches him and says, "Wow, this is a king of kings. This guy is clever; he is handsome, and loved by everybody. Everybody loves and respects this guy, and yet he loves me." Now his value has shot way up on her stock market, and her love has gone deeper because she begins to see him as he is.

The Shulammite Decreases

And we find that she also decreases during this time. There was that adventure when he came knocking on the door in the middle of the night and said, "Come; come out My beloved; come out." And she says, "I cannot come out, I am already in bed." "Oh, honey, I

love you so much, please, please come out.” All of a sudden there is silence. Then she says, “Wait, I did not really mean that; wait!” She opens the door and he is gone. Now she is humiliated, but she reproves herself: “What have I done. Have I missed my chance? How could I have done this?” She starts running out to find him, and people are jostling her around. She gets a little desperate and realizes how much her status, identity and everything is wrapped up in him. Now she becomes a seeker after him.

Nevertheless, all this time, he continues to speak his love to her. Now she starts to chase after him. She inquires of everybody she meets: “Where is he? You know who I am talking about—the loveliest person in this world—where is he? I have to find him; I have made a mistake.” Of course, they find each other. How wonderful! As a result she is decreased and he is increased. This longing on her part ripened with separation, and separation caused a greater love. All these exercises in love are part of this relationship. She realized that there were walls that were separating him and her, walls that other people had put up, walls that she had put up, and all of it must go. She does not want walls anymore because “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” He is first. He is her status and her focus, and she is glad. She wants to hang onto him.

THE THIRD STAGE OF LOVE FOR THE KING

Then the third doublet is found in 7:10, and we see that again the words have changed a little. Through chapters 6, 7, 8 she goes through more stages of this deepening relationship. And she says, “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.” Now she is really incredulous that he could ever think anything of her because she is decreased and he is increased. “His desire is for me.” He is no longer number one; He is all to her. This is like the words of the dear apostle Paul when he says, “For to me to live is Christ.” No more number one; Jesus is number one. No, Jesus is all; Jesus is life. “Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord.” Now she sees that this is life; life is Christ; life is union; life is love. She has found a union with him, and she says, “I never want to be apart from you.” And he says, “I never want to be apart from you.” Now they are abiding and speaking in this abiding. There is a relationship and dialogue and a continual talk of love one to another.

In chapter 8 there is a wonderful picture: “Who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved?” (v. 5) The Shulammitte has found her place: “leaning on her Beloved.” Now they are doing the king’s missions together. In the second stage, she did not realize how important these missions were. Now she goes with the king and co-works with him in all of his doings. They visit the vineyard, and his fragrance has become her fragrance. They even find time to help her little sister come into love, fullness and blessing. The picture now reveals the kind of union where their love is entrusted to one another, and the lover and the king of love are one. The book ends with: “Hurry, my beloved. Be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountain of spices.” Very simply, when the song ends they are still singing, and there is still great love for one another.

A LOVER PURSUING A LOVER

Now I want to make a simple point and here it is: the kingdom is a serious reality involving our submission, our bearing the cross, and our obeying the King. But if we miss the back story—that behind the kingdom of working and serving there is the love of a lover pursuing the lover—we have missed the whole point. At the deepest level you will not find

the apostle Paul serving God, and saying, “I am serving Him even though I am in jail, because I know one day I will get my reward, even though this really stinks right now.” What do you find the apostle Paul saying? I think we find it in the letter to the Philippians—a lover pursuing a Lover. Paul had been kissed and he is pursuing the One who has laid hold of him. He is going to pursue Him right up to heaven. He knows Who is his life and what is gain to him. Philippians is “lover running after Lover.” Paul had been kissed and he is running after.

There is a love story behind so much of the believer’s life. We go from glory to glory and from tribulation to tribulation, but the secret is that in the midst we discover His love. What do we discover in our kingdom service? “Oh yes, I serve well; I am a great servant; oh, look how wonderful the kingdom is.” No, what we really discover is this: “Oh, I love the King and the King loves me, and my motivation is to pursue this One who has first pursued me.” This is a deep revelation or deep secret, but I do not know if we can understand it unless we have been kissed.

THE ELDER BROTHER CHARACTER

As we think of the parable in Luke 15 we realize that there are too many children of God who are like the elder brother—dutiful, fastidious, keeping records and accounts, jealous of anything that he does not get, working hard to gain approval. All the time he was missing the hugs and kisses of his father. He just could not conceive of a father who would do that. So when the prodigal—a worthless character—came home, the father kissed him, hugged him and put a robe on him, and the elder brother was infuriated. There are so many Christians who have never been hugged or kissed by our Lord, and they are full of anger: “Why am I left out?” It is such a shame!

In the end he kisses by grace. What was there about the Shulammite? Was there some great mystery about her? No, it was the grace and love of the king; love is love. God is love. He found her, wooed her, captured her, and then she began running after him as he was running after her. That is the story. That is the end of the story. But behind the story are servants of the kingdom who have been kissed.

C. T. STUDD

One brother that we hear of frequently is C.T. Studd. He had been kissed by the Lord and pursued after Him through all his life. However, C.T. Studd was not an emotional man. He does not relate a romantic story. This guy is tough. But let me tell you how he expressed this love, and it is just as real as romantic, ravishing love.

C. T. Studd delighted in obedience. The Lord asked him to do something and he said, “I will do it, Lord. Now You will just have to take care of my body because it is falling apart.” In the last year of his life, he was translating the New Testament into the local African language, and he worked at it seventeen, eighteen hours a day, even though he had problems with gallstones and was in great pain. But he said, “The Lord told me to do it, and that’s it. Never mind my body. He will sustain me if He told me to do it.” He delighted in obeying the Lord.

This was the thing that so touched F.B. Meyer, a young wonderful preacher in England at the time. As he himself confessed, his life in the early days of his ministry was a little bit up and down, hot and cold. On one occasion he had a chance to stay in the same house with C.

T. Studd and another Cambridge crickateer who loved the Lord. Early in the morning he heard some rumbling and noise, and it ruined F. B. Meyer's sleep. Finally he went in and saw C.T. Studd, wrapped up in a rug, walking back and forth. F. B. Meyer said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I am checking off the commandments of Jesus that I find in the Bible to see if there is any one of those commandments I have neglected or overlooked. I am just checking them all off." And F.B. Meyer said, "How can I be like that?"

C. T. Studd delighted to do the will of God. Over his grave it should be written, "I delight to do Thy will, oh God." Of all that could be said about that man, he delighted to do the will of God. You can tell somebody who has been kissed, even when they are not especially emotional, because they do the will of God and are not murmuring, mumbling, or grumbling. We have murmuring multitudes in the church. Nevertheless, there are those who delight to do the will of God. It is so refreshing to be around them; it is a sign of real love.

JACOB AND JEHOVAH

Here is another love story we find in the Bible besides the apostle Paul. Jacob and Jehovah—it is a love story. You may say that this is not a love story, that it is a terrible story. Jacob does terrible things, and God just lets him do it until, finally, God tackled him and crippled his leg. This is terrible business. No, it is God's love. Our problem with love is that we have some kind of pitiable little romantic notion of love that comes from songs we have heard. God's love is vital and even dangerous. We are surprised by His jealousy and dealings, His passion and love, His forgiveness, the latitude He sometimes gives and then the restrictions He demands. His love is indescribable. But if you look at Jacob's life, there it is. He never let Jacob go; more than that, He never was going to let Jacob go. "Jacob, I have loved you with an everlasting love." That is why Romans 9-10-11 is a continuation of Jacob and Jehovah's love story. Do we understand that when God in love chooses, He does not let go. But it is love. When you give into it, it is sweet. If you fight it, you really have a fight on your hands; but I think He will win.

The King's love is so surprising. It is surprising what the Lord will speak to our heart, especially in moments of failure or discouragement. Sometimes He may just say, "You are my child," and that is all it takes to turn us around. When we hear Him say it, it is a kiss, and we rise up from the ashes and by the mercies of God we faint not. His love is so wonderfully strong.

KNOWING AND BELIEVING GOD'S LOVE

Notice what John, whom Jesus loved, says in I John 4:16. John is speaking of himself and the others with him, and he says, "*We* have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."

I would like to rephrase this a little bit. The disciple whom Jesus loved and who obviously loved the Lord Jesus has said: "We have come to know the love which God has for us." What does he mean by that? We know that the Lord says He loves us, that we are in Christ and in the love of God. But John says, "I have come to know the love of God. It is a reality to me. And I have come to believe." But doesn't it say that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life, for God so loved the world? From the

moment we believe in Jesus, we believe that God loved us and Jesus died for our sins. But now I have come to believe the love that God has for me. I think he is making a further assessment. We believe, we know, and years later we really *believe* and *know*. He who abides in God abides in love, and God abides in him. I have come to know that by experience. This disciple whom Jesus loved, who laid his head on Jesus' chest says, "I have come to know and I keep on knowing, and I keep on believing the love that God has for us.

SMELL THE FRAGRANCE OF HIS PRESENCE AND RETURN

Maybe you do not understand this or think it is nonsense, but for those of you who have been kissed on the mouth by the King and lover of your soul, is it possible to forget your first kiss? Some of you have had tough times and reason to quit. But I do not think the Lord Jesus was yelling at the church of Ephesus when He said: "Remember from where you have fallen and repent and do the first works." I think all He had to say was: "Don't you remember your first love? Don't you want to come back?" If He has kissed you, can you ever forget that kiss? If He has kissed you with the kisses of His abiding love, is it possible that you could not want to be kissed again? Isn't there something that causes you to say like the Shulammite: "Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth, for your love is better than wine."

Some people have been kissed, and I think they have since gone out to kiss the world. It must be an awful sour taste. Even if you have failed and you have forgotten, all it took for the Shulammite woman to get stirred up was to smell the fragrance of his presence as he was coming to her. He had not even gotten there yet, and she could already smell the fragrance of his coming. Does not the fragrance of His coming stir up in you a desire to rise up and to love Him?

FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST

How do we love God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength? By the grace of God one day we are captured by this One, and we find it to be a joy to confess our love for Him despite our problems. Where else can we go? Once we have been kissed by the King of glory, is there any other kiss that is going to do it? He is the satisfaction of our soul. As His servants and children, when we realize it, then there develops a whole back story to our lives. When you read biographies of people who have made such great sacrifices, or who were persecuted, what do you meet in them? You find a countenance that is full of joy and a peace in them. How can that possibly happen? It is because there is a love story behind the persecution and a Lover who was discovered, and whose love became the motive of their lives.

So whether we live in this life or go to be with the Lord, we want to glorify Him. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." That is spoken by a lover. Are you caught by Jesus Christ? Or is He still a far-off Savior? When you come to the Lord's table, is it still a Father who loves you and saved you, a Savior who shed His blood for you, but now it all seems so far away and so many years ago? Have you not met Him, heard Him, seen Him, is not yours a captured heart? Then we would just suggest that you seek out the One whom you love.

THE KING OF GLORY IS TO BE RESPECTED

When we are saved, God puts a love for Jesus in our hearts, and if we will pursue it the Spirit will fan it into a flame. He is the King of the kingdom and the King of glory and is to be

respected. I do not want to give anybody the idea that we can just talk to the Lord Jesus with a familiarity as if He were an equal.

Years ago I went to seminary to train for ministry, and I was there at the time when some theologians had come out with a stripped down version of Jesus. One guy had written a book called: "Are You Running With Me, Jesus?" There were daily devotions that said, "Hi Jesus, how are You doing? Is everything going okay with You? Well, I am having a terrible time. How about helping me out." It was so familiar—no reverence and no respect. There was nothing of the King in any of those devotions.

Jesus is the Messiah, the King, the Lord, the One to bow before, and the King of glory. Bow before Him, worship Him, serve Him, and obey His commandments. If you are doing that, He will come to you and share His love. This is the revelation that we find pictured in the Song of Solomon. May the Lord bless you and give us a real and fuller love for Jesus in all of our hearts. May His kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is heaven.

Our Father, we thank You so much for the Lord Jesus. There are so many aspects of Him and His kingdom; how could we even begin to tell of them? And even as the week has ended, there is so much more that could be said. But Lord, if there is only a glimpse of Jesus by the Holy Spirit revealed, then our time together has been of great value. Thank You, Lord, that we could gather before Your throne. Help us realize how near you are to us. Help us open up our hearts again to a living God and serve Him all our days for the sake of His kingdom. Thank You, Lord, that we can love one another for the sake of the King. Oh Lord, do seal these words into our hearts and speak your special and precious words to those who faithfully seek after You. We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen.