

The Glory of Christ and the Coronavirus

Song of Solomon 5:13; Ezra 9:6

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In times of crisis and panic (whether real or manufactured), people are usually preoccupied with mere worldly preparation (food, water, cleaning supplies, fuel, and bank accounts). It is indeed wise to be prepared as much as possible (for example, Joseph used the 7 years of plenty to prepare for the 7 years of famine). But an even greater concern is that we as Christians prepare ourselves spiritually so that we are not overcome by the fear and hysteria of the world over this coronavirus. Should not we who believe in a sovereign Lord and gracious Savior who has mercifully rescued us from the greatest and most destructive death (eternal death in hell) believe that He will provide for all our needs as He has promised?

Dear ones, these are times that test our faith in the Lord Jesus. These are times to be courageous. Biblical courage is not the absence of fear. Biblical courage recognizes a fearful crisis that exists. However, when the fear is greater than Christ, we panic. Biblical courage will not (by God's grace) bow before that fear and submit to its control, but will rather bow before our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, and submit everything and everyone to His sovereign control who loves us with an everlasting love.

Our need in times of such emergency is not only to see how great the crisis is, but more importantly, how great our Savior is. And for that reason, returning to our study of the Song of Solomon is perhaps most relevant at such a time as this. For we return to hear the bride exalt and describe the glory and greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who He is and what He has done strengthens our faith and subdues our fears (Hebrews 13:5-6). Let us behold in the words of the bride the unexcelled glory and beauty of Jesus Christ as we consider two more attributes of our Lord: (1) His Cheeks (Song 5:13); (2) His Lips (Song 5:13).

I. A Brief Review

A. It has been a few weeks since we left off hearing the chosen bride of Jesus Christ describe His unsurpassable greatness using natural parts of the body to describe His glory, so let us review from where we left off.

1. The elect bride of Jesus had been awakened from her spiritual laziness and foolish excuses for her laziness by the Lord Jesus. She began searching for Him in the nearness of communion she had previously known both privately and publicly in His ordinances, but was unable initially to regain that closeness for which she hungered and thirsted with her Savior and Lord (Song 5:2-6). As she did so, she was wounded in her conscience by false teachers posing as watchmen (ministers and elders) within the city of God—the Visible Church (Song 5:7). With such longing for the Lord Jesus to come near to her with His sensible presence, the elect bride charged the daughters of Jerusalem (professing Christians) to search for Him on her behalf—to join with her in calling for Jesus to come near that she may enjoy Him, for she was love-sick for Jesus (Song 5:8).

2. The daughters of Jerusalem are indeed challenged by what they see of this lovesickness in the bride, and so they ask what makes Jesus different from all other lovers that one may have in this world (Song 5:9). First, the beloved bride replies with a general answer (Song 5:10). She says in effect, "There is none like Him. He is without rival and without comparison. He is unlike any other lover." He is "the chiefest among ten thousand." Then the bride begins to focus her attention upon particular qualities that are true of the Lord Jesus that make Him unlike any other lover (Song 5:11-16).

a. **His head** (Song 5:11). He is sovereign Lord who reigns over all things to the benefit of His Church (over any and all crises).

b. **His locks** (Song 5:11). His strength will never grow old and vanish away (like that

of Samson's). This is a terror to the wicked, but a comfort to us who trust Him for our eternal salvation. He will provide.

c. **His eyes** (Song 5:12). He knows all and sees all. Nothing catches Him by surprise. His eyes are fiery to the wicked (Revelation 1:14), but like the gentle eyes of a dove toward His bride. He knows and sees what you are going through right now. He is with you.

B. This is the Jesus that you are called to worship in faith, love, and submission. The Christian who is lovesick for Jesus will not be satisfied with some counterfeit image of Jesus formed by the mind of man or by the hands of man. When you are lovesick for Jesus, you want the true Jesus revealed in Scripture, and you want all of Him. Only He can save and satisfy. Only He can conquer all fears.

II. **The Glorious Qualities of Our Savior.**

A. **His Cheeks (Song 5:13).**

1. The cheeks are in ancient and modern literature known for signifying one's character or virtue, especially when referring to blushing cheeks. A "blushing bride" speaks of a bride whose cheeks are flushed and red—it says that she is a virgin who has kept herself pure. To blush over sin is to be embarrassed or ashamed over that sin—one's character is ashamed—a godly response (Ezra 9:6). We need to see more blushing over our own sin before God, and then over the sin of others. To not blush over sin is not to be ashamed over sin—an ungodly response (Jeremiah 6:15). One other reference to cheeks in Scripture is to smite the cheeks. This is intended as a most serious insult, intended to bring reproach and shame upon a person (similar to spitting upon a person). Sometimes it is deserved upon the ungodly whose character needs to be ashamed (Psalm 3:7). At other times it is undeserved upon the godly whose character and virtue is attacked (Job 16:10).

2. Why are the cheeks of Jesus one aspect of His glory that are as fragrant as "a bed of spices" and as beautiful as "sweet flowers"?

a. Those are the cheeks of virtue that He gave to those who insulted and reproached Him. They were red and bruised not due to shame He suffered for His own sin, but due to the shame He suffered for your sin and mine—the sin of His beloved and elect bride who was filled with all manner of corruption, guilt, and condemnation. We had our own lovers in the world (our lusts, pleasures, false religions). We did not want the Jesus of the Bible. But He had chosen us in love from all eternity, and came to earth redeem us through His suffering. His holy cheeks were beaten and bruised for you, His beloved bride. He was mocked and ridiculed. He was blindfolded and told to tell them who hit him on those bruised and bloodied cheeks (Isaiah 50:6; Micah 5:1; Mark 14:65).

b. We who have been saved from God's just wrath and condemnation love the sight of those cheeks of purity and virtue that were smitten and beaten for our impure and ungodly cheeks. His were smitten that God might not smite ours with the rod of His everlasting wrath in hell. Those blessed cheeks that were despised and hated are most beautiful to us, His elect bride, who knows He endured that suffering for us. Just as the burned and scorched hands of a husband that rescued and saved his wife and children from a burning building would not be ugly in their sight (though they may be ugly to those who were never rescued), so the bloodied and scarred cheeks of righteousness that belong to Jesus must remind us what He suffered to rescue you and me from hell. When we by faith see those bruised cheeks, we call them beautiful, weep and kiss them with the love that He begat in us.

c. It is now your blessed duty and mine to follow in the steps of our Lord Jesus and to suffer for His sake—whether at home, work, or school (Matthew 5:39). When He was so insulted for you, is it so far below you to be insulted, mocked, and even spat upon for Him? If you would reign with Him, you must also suffer the blows of insult for Him.

d. Ought not our cheeks to blush with our own shame before the Lord over our

own sin? Do we continue on our merry way, caring little that we offend such a glorious Savior by our lack of trust in Him in the fears and anxieties over crises that we face (as if it is no big deal to Him)? When the suffering of Jesus is precious to you, His doctrine, worship, gospel, commandments, prayer, and fellowship with Him will also be precious to you. We do not love His truth as we ought because we do not love His suffering for us as we ought. We have forgotten.

e. Those bruised cheeks, that bloody back, those nail-pierced hands and feet, that spear-pierced wound in His side tells you that His love for you, His precious bride chosen in Christ Jesus before the world began, is unlike any other love the world has ever known. There is none to compare with Him (“He is the chiefest among ten thousand” Song 5:10). It is a sacrificial love that rescued you from eternal damnation and clothed you with His glorious and beautiful righteousness. That is a love that will never let you go even in facing those fearful crises in your life. That is a love that will not push you away when you come to Him in prayer. That is a love that humbles and crushes the pride of the haughty and directs all glory to Jesus Christ. His bruised and bloody cheeks are beautiful to all who truly love Him. Are they beautiful to you?

B. His Lips (Song 5:13).

1. We move from the sight of His blessed cheeks to the hearing of His blessed lips. For the lips of our Savior bring forth life-giving words and are beautiful like lilies and fragrant like myrrh. In a crisis, it is not only the sight of the cheeks of Jesus that comfort you, but also His lips that declare His promises that powerfully give you hope that He has not forgotten you regardless of the trials and emergencies you may face. To have a photo of your loved one who is away is a comfort as you put it in a prominent place to be seen, but to hear the lips of your beloved comfort you with words by phone—there is nothing more encouraging to uplift the lonely heart, especially when facing some emergency crisis.

2. True faith is not simply reading the promises of Christ and believing that they are true. Genuine faith lays hold of the promises in Scripture as spoken by the lips of Jesus as if He was talking to you personally on the phone, calling you to believe His promises to be true to you personally. Dear ones, all the promises of God are yea (yes) and amen (true) to you who are His elect bride (**2 Corinthians 1:20**). To not believe so is in effect to call Jesus Christ a liar or to act as though He is a liar. That’s what your unbelief and mine implies: “I don’t believe all the promises in Jesus are mine.” Dear ones, they become yours when you are united to Christ by faith. If you would believe that a last will and testament that was signed and notarized by a loved one in leaving to you an inheritance was yours rather than leaving it in the bank, why would you doubt the words that flow from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ who cannot lie—it is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18)? Are you trusting in what you fear and doubt or are you trusting in the pure and holy lips of Jesus? Are you trusting in what you can see (like Thomas) rather than in the true and faithful lips of Jesus (John 20:29)?

3. Listen to several beautiful, fragrant, and life-giving promises of Jesus Christ that will give rise to courage and hope and will chase away your fear (all of Scripture is filled with Christ’s unbreakable promises which have been purchased for you in the Covenant of Grace): John 5:24 (salvation); Matthew 11:28 (weary from heavy burdens); Psalm 27:5 (times of trouble); 1 John 1:9 (forgiveness of sin); Philippians 4:13 (feel like quitting); Philippians 4:19 (need); Romans 6:6 (sanctification); Romans 8:28 (a good purpose in all that happens to you).

C. What Jesus works in your heart and mind as you cling to His promises is hope that never disappoints or makes ashamed (Romans 5:5). His promises are not realized according to your calendar or mine, but they will be realized. The nominal Christian will listen politely to what I have just said, but those of you who trust and love the Lord Jesus will do more than that. You will lay hold of these promises as your personal promises—as if you heard them spoken to you directly from the glorious lips of the Lord Jesus. His promises are not to be merely admired as a wall decoration. They are to be believed, received with

thanksgiving and joy, and practiced. They are the beautiful lips of Jesus to you.

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