

Session 6 God’s Superior Love: How God Feels about Us (Song 1:2)

I. REVIEW: THE SUPERIOR PLEASURES IN THE GRACE OF GOD

- A. The Bride referred to the “superior pleasures” of the Word. This reveals her theology related to holiness. She points to the superior pleasures that come from growing in revelation of God’s heart (affection). God created us with seven longings that draw us to Him and reflect His glory in us.

²*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is better than wine (Song 1:2).*

- B. In this session, we will look at seven principles of Jesus’ love that is better than the wine. These are foundational principles that are essential in helping us understand God’s affection for us in our weakness (this eight-chapter love Song develops these principles in the Bride’s journey). It is not difficult to imagine God loving perfected believers in heaven. The difficulty comes with believing that He has affection for weak and broken people in this age.

¹*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us... (1 Jn. 3:1)*

- C. God loves us in the same way that God loves God. The Father’s love (affection) for Jesus is the same measure of His love for His people.

⁹*“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide [live] in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)*

²³*“...that the world may know that You...have loved them as You have loved Me.” (Jn. 17:23)*

- D. We love God because we understand that God first loved us.

¹⁹*We love Him because [we understand that] He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)*

II. FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE: SPIRITUAL IMMATUREITY IS NOT REBELLION

- A. God feels different emotions related to how people respond to Him. Some live confused, without knowing whether God is mad, sad, or glad when relating to them. We do not want to think God is mad when He is delighting over us, thus living in condemnation. Nor do we want to think He delights in us if He is grieved because of our compromise, thus living in presumption.
- B. We receive God’s righteousness and favor because of what Jesus did on the cross, not because of what we do (Rom. 3:21-31). It is necessary to sincerely repent to receive God’s saving grace.
- C. Repentance is a change of the attitude of the heart that turns from sin and to God, according to the “light of understanding” that we have at each season of our spiritual journey. Repentance is breaking our agreement with darkness and agreeing with God in our thoughts, words, and deeds.
- D. Spiritual immaturity is not the same as rebellion. Many are confused about this. At times they look the same outwardly, yet inwardly they arise from very different heart responses. Our actions do matter to God, however, God looks at our heart more than our actions.

- E. A genuine lover of Jesus sincerely pursues to obey Him with a willing spirit. A sincere yet still immature believer repents in each area of failure that they receive light on. The rebellious says “No” to God without immediate plans to obey. Pre-meditated sin is sin that is planned beforehand. This is much more serious to God than sinning in our spiritual immaturity.
- ⁴¹***“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mt. 26:41)***
- F. Our repentance, obedience and love for God are sincere even while they are weak and flawed. Weak love is not false love, therefore, Jesus values our love for Him even when it is weak.
- G. The sincere intention to obey God is distinct from the attainment of mature obedience. The pursuit of full obedience is different than attaining it. The Lord is pleased with us from the time we repent (by setting our heart to obey Him) which is long before our obedience matures. As genuine lovers of God we do not immediately attain to all that we seek to walk in.
- H. The believer who sins, shows their sincerity by quickly repenting and renewing their war against that sin. Sincere repentance is not the same as attaining “sinless perfection” in this life. Do not write yourself off as rebellious if in fact you are spiritually immature.
- I. A hypocrite is somebody who says one thing but does not pursue or seek to obey it. Struggling in weakness (immaturity) is not the same thing as being a hopeless hypocrite (rebellious).
- J. God delights in the sincere desire or cry in our spirit to obey Him. Our sincere desire to obey God is a substantial beginning of our victory over sin. It is part of God’s work in you.
- K. God does not confuse spiritual immaturity with rebellion (the OT law spoke of clean and unclean animals: sheep and swine which both become stuck in the mud). The illustration of clean and unclean animals helps us understand this because both sheep and swine become stuck in mud.
- L. If we confuse this, we will bring others under condemnation. This can injure their faith. This is the opposite of the conviction of the Spirit, which gives us confidence to go deep in God.
- M. God viewed the spiritual immaturity of the apostles very differently than the rebellion of the Pharisees. David seemed to commit more serious sins than Saul, but God’s favor continued with David. Why? When David sinned his heart was wounded because he grieved God’s heart. He cared more about his relationship with God than the consequences of getting caught. When Saul sinned he planned to continue in it until caught and confronted. He only gave an outward show of repentance as he continued in rebellion (1 Sam. 15:22-23).
- ⁶***Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. (Ps. 23:6)***
- N. God’s mercy gives us confidence that we can have a new beginning with God as a first class citizen after we repent. We are defined by God’s passion for us, receiving the gift of righteousness, and by our sincere heart cry to be a wholehearted lover of God.
- O. We “push delete” after we have sincerely repented. Jesus paid the price that we might stand before God with confidence of having His favor. This is very different from “pushing delete” on our need to understand the process and mindset that contributed to a stronghold of sin in our life.

- P. Our identity is as a genuine lover of God. Guilt says that our actions are wrong. Shame says we (our whole personhood) are wrong. **Question:** Are you a slave of sin who struggles to love God or a lover of God who still struggles with sin? Many define themselves by their failure. Because of Jesus, we are much better in God's sight than the worst thing we have done.

III. PRINCIPLE #1: GOD LOVES AND BLESSES UNBELIEVERS

- A. God loves unbelievers even when they rebel against Him and have no regard for Him (Mt. 5:45).
¹⁶“God so loved the world that He gave His only...Son, that whoever believes... (Jn. 3:16)
⁸God demonstrates His own love...in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)
- B. God blesses evil people. We are not to mistake His blessings on them as His approval of them.
⁴⁵“...makes His sun rise on the evil and...the good...sends rain on the just and...unjust. (Mt. 5:45)
- C. God is angry at their rebellion and refuses to forgive those who will not repent (Esau, Saul, etc.).
*²²“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name...?’
²³...I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me...’” (Mt. 7:22-23)*

IV. PRINCIPLE #2: GOD ENJOYS AND DELIGHTS IN IMMATURE BELIEVERS

- A. God loves unbelievers, yet He only enjoys believers. Jesus immediately rejoices over us at the time of our repentance. He smiles over us when we begin the growth process with sincere repentance, long before we attain spiritual maturity.
*⁴“What man...having a hundred sheep...does not leave the ninety-nine...and go after the one...? ⁵...when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶...he calls together his friends...saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’
⁷...there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents...” (Lk. 15:4-7)*
- B. Jesus feels compassion over the prodigals on the day they repent. God revealed His enjoyment of the prodigal son by the father giving him the best robes (Lk. 15:22). This newly repentant, yet immature prodigal son had many areas of his life that still needed transformation.
¹⁸“...I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned...’ ²⁰...he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²²...the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet...” (Lk. 15:18-22)
- C. God enjoys us even in our immaturity. He delighted in David on the day of his repentance.
¹⁹He delivered me [David] because He delighted in me... (Ps. 18:19)
- D. Our most sincere efforts to love God are flawed. We are lovely to God even in our weakness.
⁵I am dark [in my heart], but lovely [to God because of Jesus]... (Song 1:5)

- E. Jesus walked in the anointing of gladness more than any man in history. Gladness is at the center of His personality. Many think of God as being mostly mad or sad when they relate to Him.
⁹Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions. (Heb. 1:9)
- F. God delights in showing us mercy. He wants us confident that He enjoys us (even in our weakness) as we walk in sincere repentance. Then we run to Him instead of from Him.
¹⁸He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)
²⁴"I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment...for in these I delight." (Jer. 9:24)
- G. God gives a repentant believer a new beginning as a "first class citizen" each time they repent.
²²Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. ²³They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lam. 3:22-23)
- H. God remembers and understands our weaknesses far more than we do. He does not discipline us to the degree that we deserve, nor does He change the way He feels about us in our weaknesses.
*¹⁰He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.
¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him...
¹⁴For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. (Ps. 103:10-14)*
- I. Summary: God smiles over our life in a general sense, while He deals with particular sins in us. Several areas of immaturity do not define our entire relationship with God. We are defined by God's passion for us, receiving the gift of righteousness and by our heart cry to obey Jesus.

V. PRINCIPLE #3: GOD'S ENJOYMENT IS NOT THE SAME AS HIS APPROVAL

- A. The fact that God enjoys us does not mean He overlooks the areas in us that need transformation. God's enjoyment of a believer is not the same as His approval of all that they do. He corrects areas that He disapproves of so that He might remove all that hinders love (holiness) in us.
¹⁰...He [disciplines us] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. (Heb. 12:10)
- B. God has tender patience for a season with believers who do not repent. They must not confuse His patience with His approval. Jesus gave Jezebel and her disciples in Thyatira time to repent.
*²¹"I gave her [Jezebel] time to repent of her...immorality...
²²...I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent..." (Rev. 2:21-22)*
¹¹Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. (Eccl. 8:11)
- C. When we neglect to honestly and thoroughly confront sin in our heart we are not loved less by God, but we do suffer loss in several ways. We minimize our ability to experience the joy of our salvation, the spirit of revelation, godly fellowship and to receive eternal rewards.

D. God patiently suffers long with us in His love as He works to lead us to repentance.

⁴*Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)*

⁴*Love suffers long and is kind...⁷bears all things...endures all things. (1 Cor. 13:4-7)*

VI. PRINCIPLE #4: GOD'S DISCIPLINE IS NOT THE SAME AS HIS REJECTION OF US

A. God's correction is not His rejection, rather it is proof of His love. God hates the sin yet delights in the person He disciplines.

¹²*Whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Prov. 3:12)*

⁶*Whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives... (Heb. 12:6)*

B. Jesus rebukes, yet loves believers that are in need of repentance.

¹⁹*"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent." (Rev. 3:19)*

C. To be disciplined means God cares and has not given up on us. It is a terrible thing to "get away with" sin long term because that means God is giving that person over to their sin. God's discipline is proof that He has not given up on us (Rom. 1:24-28).

²⁴*God...gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts... (Rom. 1:24)*

³²*When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. (1 Cor. 11:32)*

D. God did not give up on His people Israel when even when they were in a season of disobedience.

³⁷*For their [children of Israel] heart was not steadfast with Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant. ³⁸But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath; ³⁹for He remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away... (Ps. 78:37-39)*

VII. PRINCIPLE #5: GOD IS GRIEVED OVER THE PERSISTENT SIN OF HIS PEOPLE

A. Jesus will vomit lukewarm believers out of His mouth. This does not speak of God casting them away, but of Him feeling sick at heart or grieved over their lives.

¹⁶*"Because you are lukewarm...I will vomit you out of My mouth." (Rev. 3:16-17)*

³⁰*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. (Eph. 4:30)*

¹⁹*Do not quench the Spirit. (1 Thes. 5:19)*

- B. God feels the pain of those He disciplines and continues to consider them as His dearly beloved.
⁹In all their affliction He was afflicted...in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. (Isa. 63:9)
- ⁷"I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies." (Jer. 12:7)*
- C. When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our heart we are not loved less by God but we do suffer loss in several ways. We minimize our ability to experience the joy of our salvation, the spirit of revelation, God's power, fellowship with God and others, and receiving eternal rewards. We can only fulfill our highest calling and destiny in this age and the age to come by walking in faithful obedience and with a history of diligently seeking God. Faithfulness does not earn our calling for us but it positions us to receive more grace that we might enter into it. The Spirit calls us to diligence that we might enter into our fullness of authority in this age and the age to come.
¹¹We also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power... (2 Thes. 1:11)
- D. We must be confident that God in His love for us will manifest His zeal or jealousy over us. God jealously requires that we live in wholehearted obedience. He zealously insists on that which deepens our relationship with Him and results in our greatness.
⁵Do you think the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit...in us yearns jealously?" (Jas. 4:5)

VIII. PRINCIPLE #6: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES DO NOT EARN US GOD'S FAVOR

- A. Spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, meditation, etc.) are ordained by God as a necessary way to posture our heart to freely receive more grace. These activities do not earn us God's favor. The power is in the "bonfire of God's presence" not in our cold hearts that are positioned before it.
- B. God gives to our heart on the basis of how much we hunger for relationship with Him not on how much He loves us (Mt. 5:6). God honors the value we put on the relationship by giving us more according to our spiritual hunger (Gal. 6:8) but He does not love us more. God will not enjoy an obedient believer more in a billion years than He does now (Mal. 3:6).

IX. PRINCIPLE #7: MATURITY ALLOWS US TO RECEIVE MORE (NOT BE LOVED MORE)

- A. God loves us all yet He entrusts a greater measure of power to the mature. He determines the measure of power that He has planned for each to walk in. This measure is different for each believer (Mt. 25:15). Our obedience positions us to walk in whatever that full measure is.
- B. People with greater power in ministry or influence in business are not loved more by God. He will entrust more to us as we mature because it will not damage us nor others. The gifts of the Spirit are given to us by faith (Acts 3:11-12; Gal. 3:5). They are not earned by our discipline. However, our spiritual maturity provides added protection from the counterattack of Satan (Lk. 14:30-32) on those operating in the anointing. Four things increase as we experience more of the Holy Spirit's power (God's zeal, Satan's rage, man's demands, our emotional capacities).