

GOSPEL HIGHWAY

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Desiring Christ (Song 1:1-7)

by B. S. Poh

We come to Song 1:1-7, which shows what it means to desire after the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 1 tells us that it is “the song of songs, which *is* Solomon’s.” It is the greatest and most sublime of songs. Those who are song writers and singers may have your own ideas of which is the greatest and most sublime of songs, but the Scripture declares this song as the most sublime and greatest. We must see in this description spiritual things to be learned which are beyond our human ability to compose or write.

We accept this book as a spiritual allegory written by King Solomon, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to teach us lofty, spiritual, lessons. From the present passage, we learn how Christians should desire after Christ, and why we should desire Him. There are, therefore, two parts to this message, under each of which are three main points.

I. How Christians should desire after Christ (vv. 2-4)

Arises from Christ’s love for us

In the first section, we consider how Christians should desire after Christ. We learn, first of all, that our desire for Christ should arise from Christ’s love for us. We are told in verse 2, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth - for your love *is* better than wine.” These words express one’s desire for the love of Christ, not the love that one has for Christ. They are about Christ’s love for His people, not His people’s love for Him. As Christ’s people, we desire more of His love. These are words of the Shulamite woman directed to the groom. There are two words we wish to take note of, namely, “kisses” and “love”.

Kisses are expressions of love in the heart. There must be love in the heart for there to be expressions of love. We know that Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss although he had no love for Him. But, here, we are dealing with expressions of love which arise from true love in the heart. The Lord Jesus Christ has shown His love for His people, and His people want more of the expressions of His love. The desire for more kisses from Him is the desire for more of the expressions of His love.

We recognise the fact that Christ is the One who loves us first before we could love Him. We are told in 1 John 4:19 that we love God because He first loved us. Similarly, we are able to love the Lord Jesus Christ because He first loved us. Left to ourselves, we would have been lost in our sins. We would have gone far away in the ways of the world. But the Lord has come to look for His sheep. He has laid down His life to save them. In recognition of His initiative to save us, in love, we ask for more expressions of His love to us. We want to experience more of His presence because we love Him, and are grateful for the salvation He has given to us. We appreciate His love for us, and want more of the expressions of His love. No mother will begrudge her son wanting more of the wonderful food she has cooked. The Lord is pleased when we show our appreciation for His love by wanting more.

Then, we consider the word “love”. In the original language, the word translated as “love” is in the plural. It is a reference to the many blessings of God upon His people, through Jesus Christ. God shows His love by His many blessings to His people. A grandmother pours forth her love upon her grandchild. A lover pours forth his love upon the one he loves. God showed His love for His people by choosing them from eternity to be saved. He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for

His people. Jesus Christ willingly laid down His life for His people because of His eternal love for them. In Christ, we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings. These are the “loves” of God, His blessings, showered upon His people.

Compare the spiritual blessings of the Lord with the wine of the world. The worldling wants only the power, fame, riches, and enjoyments the world offers. He does not want salvation, communion with God, fellowship with God’s people, much less Christ Himself. We were once like that - we had no desire for spiritual things, until God met with us, convicted us of our sins, and gave us salvation in His Son Jesus Christ. But we must constantly check ourselves, lest we are drawn away by the ways of the world. Have you been drawn away by the world? Everytime we walk into one of the modern shopping malls, we can’t help feeling that we are entering the “vanity fair” that is described in John Bunyan’s book, “Pilgrim’s Progress”. The place is crowded with shoppers, who are constantly tempted by the wares on display. They are bombarded by the loud music and exposed to the blinking lights, which are intended to control the emotions. The beats of the music are such that they make you move, they make you act, they make you want to buy, and to buy more. I am not saying that all who go to the shopping mall are sinning. I am not saying that Christians should never go to such shopping malls. And I am not saying that you should feel guilty everytime you are in one. I am only asking you to be careful, and to be aware of the ways of the world. When we were first converted, we loved the Lord above all else in the world. We were prepared to give our all to the Lord. He was most precious to us. We were prepared to forego everything for Him. Have you forgotten that? But where is that love for the Lord today? This passage, if it does nothing else, should at least awaken you to consider afresh your first love. Beware of being drawn away by the world! We must regain our first love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Focused on His person

The second point is that our desire for Christ should be focussed upon His person. We are told in verse 3, “Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, your name *is* ointment poured forth...” In the Bible, ointments perform many beneficial functions. First, it is for healing. A wound heals well when the right ointment is applied. The Bible speaks of “the balm of Gilead,” which was for healing. Second, ointments soothe those who are bruised and wounded. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, oil and wine were applied on the wounded person, to soothe his pain as much as to help in the healing of the wounds. Third, ointments refresh people. In the Gospels, we read of the Lord being anointed with fragrant oil on the head and feet. Such ointments refresh the person who was applied with them, and the fragrance also refresh those around him. These, then are the functions of fragrant ointments - they heal, they soothe and they refresh.

When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we are healed of the wounds inflicted by sins. Sins caused us so much trouble, wounding us in every way, and troubled our conscience. We struggled over our sins until we finally came to find rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. The hymn writers like to portray Jesus Christ as the One who heals us of our wounds by His blood, which was shed on the cross of Calvary. For example, we sing:

*There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Loose all their guilty stains.*

(William Cowper, 1731-1800)

This, of course, does not mean that we become completely free from sins. It simply means we are forgiven of all our sins and we can draw strength from Christ to fight against remaining sins.

Then, secondly, Christ soothes us in our pain when we are persecuted for our faith. If we are not outrightly persecuted, we often have to exercise self-denial for the Lord’s sake, which causes us to smart and shed tears in secret. We deny ourselves willingly, and give up our rights for the good of others, in Christ’s name. This is when we realize that the Lord “put our tears in His bottle,” as the Psalmist says (Ps. 56:8). He knows that we do all these for His sake. It is because our hearts are

overflowing with gratitude for the salvation found in Him. Mary Magdalene showed forth her gratitude to the Lord by anointing Him with fragrant oil. She wept tears of gratitude and love. We know that nothing we do can make up for the salvation given to us in Christ, but we would still deny ourselves for the Lord's sake. Do we still have that love for the Lord? We do not want our hearts to grow cold.

Then, thirdly, remember that our Lord often refreshes us spiritually so that we are strengthened and made able to bear up with trials. There are trials that come to us because of our faith. There are also trials that we share in common with the fallen human race. Just as others suffer because of tsunami, earthquake, economic crisis, or accidents of various kinds, so too we suffer with them due to our common humanity. The Lord will draw near to His people and strengthen them in the midst of such trials. He fulfils His promise never to leave His people or to forsake them. His word refreshes our souls.

We see now these three ways the Lord helps us in difficult circumstances - like the fragrance of various ointments He heals our wounds, soothes our pain, and refreshes our weariness. Note, however, that there is one ointment that is singled out for mention, namely His name. Let us consider the name of Jesus Christ. A name conjures up the person of that name. It reminds us of who he is, what he is like, and what he means to us. When we think of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are actually thinking of who He is and what He is like. We remember that He is the Son of God who had come to the world by taking upon Himself perfect human nature. We think of His attributes such as His eternity, His power, and His glory. We remember that He is holy, righteous, just, and pure. We remember that He loves His people and had come to give of Himself to them.

Then, we are reminded that His name speaks of His authority and fame. Before His ascension, the Lord declared that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him (Matt. 28:18). He laid down His life voluntarily for His people, and He took it up again. We know that He is risen from the dead and is seated down "at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3), an expression which speaks of His power and His glory. Do you know where the Lord is now, and what He is doing? The Scripture tells us that He is in heaven, interceding for His people on earth. He rules over the universe, even though the world fails to recognise Him as Lord. The day will come when everyone will bow his knees to Jesus Christ and acknowledge that He is Lord and God. That day will certainly come!

You see how "the name of the Lord" speaks of His power and His fame. In the Old Testament time, Moses was given fame by God such that the pagan nations feared him and his God. At the mere mention of Moses's name, the nations trembled and were as good as conquered, even before the Israelites arrived to attack them (Deut. 2:25). The same happened to Joshua when he took over the leadership from Moses. God gave Joshua fame such that the Amorite tribes were disarmed by fear even before he arrived (Josh. 6:27; 9:9). David was similarly feared by the enemies (Ps. 18:43-45). The same thing is happening today - the nations of the world fear the name of Jesus Christ. Before the fall of communism in Russia, the authorities persecuted the Christians severely. They hated the Christians, and they feared the name of Christ. The same thing happened in China, and continues to an extent. The Muslim nations are particularly fearful of the spread of the Christian faith in their midst. The orthodox Jews in Israel are fiercely antagonistic toward the Christians. Even the so-called free countries of the West are agitating for the removal and exclusion of any Christian values and teaching in the public schools and other institutions.

Christ is feared by the nations! He is the captain of our salvation. He leads us into spiritual battle, to overcome sins in our lives, and to conquer the strongholds of Satan by the preaching of the gospel. The Lord is building His church, and the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it. With Christ leading us in the battle, we are sure of victory. Every time we are faced with apparent setbacks, let us remember that we are serving in the army of the Lord. You see now that the name of Jesus Christ conjures up these ideas in our mind. It speaks to us of His person, His attributes, His authority and His fame. So, when we desire Christ, that desire is focused upon His person.

Based on His redemptive work

The third point is that our desire for Christ is based on His redemptive work. In verse 4, the bride says,

“Draw me away!” She recognises that the groom must draw her, otherwise she will not come. The maids-in-waiting respond to the bride by saying, in verse 4, “We will run after you.” The “you” here is in the masculine singular sense, referring to the groom. This means that all Christians, and those who are attached to the church, will be drawn to Christ only if they are drawn by Him. Do you find this doctrine strange? You shouldn’t, because this is part-and-parcel of the gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ says, in John 6:44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...” Also, in John 12:32, we have, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.” This shows that God must draw us, otherwise we will not come to Him. Christ must call us, otherwise we will not follow Him. Our sinful nature has such a hold on us that we are unable, of ourselves, to desire the things of God, much less to desire God Himself. And we certainly are not able to repent and believe in Christ for salvation. God must enable us by the power of His Spirit, as we hear His word, so that we are drawn to Christ for salvation. We recognise the truth that salvation is totally of the Lord. We also realise that God does not save us by forcing us into His kingdom. Instead, He draws by transforming us by the power of His Spirit so that we willingly come to Him.

This “drawing” is not only unto salvation, but also to communion with Christ. In the Old Testament, no one could enter “the holiest of holy” in the temple, which was cut off from the inner court of worship by the heavy curtain, or veil. Only the high priest could enter it once a year, after making atonement for his own sins by offering up animal sacrifices. The holiest of holy was the place where God was symbolically present. Human beings were too impure to be allowed into the holy presence of God. When the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, the veil in the temple of Jerusalem was torn into two, from top to bottom. This was a way of declaring that sinners who trust in Jesus Christ may now come directly into the presence of God, for Christ has made that possible. By His death on the cross, He paid for the punishment of sins that should rightly have fallen on us. By faith in Christ, we are reckoned to be righteous so that God accepts us as His children. We are therefore encouraged to draw near to our Father in heaven, in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. We draw near to God in prayer, knowing that we will be accepted by Him because Christ makes intercession for us in heaven as our High Priest. Ye, we draw near, not just to the Father, but to Christ, both in prayer and in the reading of Scriptures, knowing that Christ loves His people and delights in them.

We read further, “The king has brought me into his chambers. We will be glad and rejoice in you.” Since the Lord delights in His people, He draws us near to Him. The believer may come to Christ directly, without the need to go through human priests, or angels, or men as intermediaries. We can go right into His presence without fear of rejection, and without fear of punishment. Remember how Queen Esther once made bold to enter into the presence of the king without his prior consent. She risked being rejected, and being punished with death, until the king stretched forth his scepter to her to indicate his acceptance of her. In Christ, we have been made clean, and we are clothed in His righteousness. He treats us as precious children, and draws us near to Himself.

The “you” in this verse is in the feminine singular, showing that it is a reference to the bride. The maids-in-waiting are happy for the bride and recognise how privileged she is to be able to draw near to groom. In the same way, many people acknowledge how blessed Christians are although they would not come to Christ, at least not at the moment. My mother-in-law used to encourage people to go to church in the days when she was not yet a believer, for she noticed the good in Christians. Many non-Christian parents encourage their sons and daughters to seek for life partners in church, realizing that Christians make good husbands and wives. We know that that is going to church for the wrong reason, but it is nevertheless true that the blessedness of Christians are noticed by non-believers and those who are seeking the truth. So, here, we have the maids-in-waiting - representing the friends and relatives we bring to church, the seekers after the truth, and the new believers we have been helping - admiring the work of God in our lives.

We might mistakenly think that, in this passage, only the bride draws near to the groom, while the maids-in-waiting observe from a distance. The next two sentences show us the true situation: “We will remember your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you.” Here, the words “your” and “you” are in the masculine singular, showing that they are references to the groom, and therefore to Christ. The maids-in-waiting share in the love of the groom. The bride is not alone with the groom, but is accompanied by the maids-in-waiting. As she seeks the groom, she brings her friends to him,

introducing him to them, so that they, too, benefit from him. This is the picture of the believer seeking communion with Christ and in the process, bringing others to know Him and to share in His blessings.

Note another thing, namely that the word “love” is in the plural, as in verse 2. It is a reference to the many blessings that come to us from the Lord - the blessings of love, joy, peace, hope, comfort, help, and much more! Just as a parent is indulgent towards his or her child, Christ wants to bless us with abundance of blessings. He will not spoil us, but He gives us all good gifts for our good. In contrast to “wine”, which symbolizes the pleasures and attractions of the world, the believer values the blessings of Christ far more.

Finally, note that the word “rightly” should be translated as “the righteous” or “the upright”. The sentence should read, “The righteous ones love you.” Check this out in the original language, and you will see that this is true. Put all these facts together, and you will find that those who understand the passage as teaching the physical love relationship between the bride and the groom have missed the point all together. The passage is teaching us spiritual truths that are consistent with the overall teaching of the Bible. Jesus Christ died for His people. By the preaching and hearing of the gospel, He draws people to Himself. Those who are His draw near to Him to commune with Him and to enjoy His many spiritual blessings.

We see, in summary, how Christians should desire Christ. We desire Christ because of His love for us. We desire Christ for who He is. We also desire Christ based on His redemptive work. Loving Christ, and desiring Him, is not mere sentimentalism. If you claim to love Christ, do you seek to commune with Him? Is your love intelligent? Is it based on truth?

II. Why Christians should desire Christ (vv. 5-7)

Christ has made us righteous

We have covered verses 1 to 4, from which we learn how Christians should desire Christ. We come now to the second part of the message, covering verses 5 to 7, from which we learn why Christians should desire Christ. Again, we shall draw out three main points. The first reason why we should desire Christ is that He has made us righteous. We read in verse 5, “I *am* dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.” We must note from the outset that this has nothing to do with ethnicity. It is a happy fact that the Bible makes it very clear that salvation is offered to all, regardless of ethnic background. What we have here is the description of the bride who is sun-tanned to such an extent that she appeared dark and weather-beaten. This is made clear by the first part of verse 6, which reads, “Do not look upon me, because I *am* dark, because the sun has tanned me.” Those who are born and raised in urban areas might not grasp this immediately, but those in rural settings, who have to be out under the sun much, will appreciate this straightaway. Rural folk, who have to be in the farm much, are often darker than what they otherwise would be and their skins are often rough and thick - of the texture we would describe as weather-beaten. Often, at first glance, you would think them older than what they actually are.

Here, then, is the description of the bride of herself. She is conscious of her darkness, but also aware of her natural beauty. That beauty would have been overlooked by many, but Solomon had spotted it when he found her. Now that she has come to know Solomon, and been betrothed to him, she is able to look her best despite the lingering darkness of her skin. She is recounting her recent past, and explaining her present blessedness. It is the picture of the sinner who is found by Christ, and has come to believe in Him. He is by nature sinful and unrighteous, with nothing to commend before God. Yet, the Lord has come to search for him, wooed him by the gospel, and won his love so that he willingly follows Him. Such a believer knows that he is loved by God, and made lovely by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him.

While the world fails to see anything beautiful or attractive in the Christian, the Lord loves him and has made him beautiful in God’s sight. By and large, the world sees only the ugly side of the church, although we do come across those who admire the beauty of character in Christians, as we have noted earlier. Occasionally, they may acknowledge that Christians have many admirable qualities, but they would still shy away from them for fear of being won over to their faith. Or, more accurately, they love

their sinful way of life and find it hard to follow after Christ. When the tsunami occurred in Asia in recent days, followed by a series of earthquakes, Christians have been among the first to give tangible aid to the victims. Christians gave generously and were involved in practical ways, to help in the disaster areas. While many non-governmental organisations and the local authorities have largely withdrawn from providing aid, churches are still doing so. Despite this, the world at large forgets quickly and would prefer to look upon the church as ugly. But what does it matter if God loves us and regard us as beautiful? Yes, we are not yet made perfect while on earth, but we are a people being prepared for heaven. The world sees the church as rough and dark as “the tents of Kedar”, which were made with goat-skins, but God looks upon her as beautiful and attractive, like the curtains that adorned Solomon’s palace.

The blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed us of all our filth, and we stand righteous in God’s sight. We are regarded as holy by God, and are well-loved by our Lord.

Christ has redeemed us from bondage

The second reason why we should desire the Lord is that He has redeemed us from the bondage of sin. The bride in this story had been exploited by her half-brothers, who sent her out into the fields, under the hot sun, to tend their vineyards. It appears that the siblings had been distributed their respective plots of land since the death of their father, and each had to take care of his own vineyard. The half-brothers of the bride, however, hated her and made her take care of their plots of land. She had been unable to take care of her own vineyard, much less her well-being and her looks. Before our conversion, we were with the people of the world, engaged in worldly pursuits. We harmed ourselves and neglected our own interests, failing to cultivate good values and our character. We were drawn away by the forces of the world. That was what we were like. When converted, we discovered there are remaining sins that trouble us from within, at the same time that the world jeers and taunts us from without.

The struggle with remaining sins is described in Romans 7:15, “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” Then, in verses 21-24, “I find then a law, that evil is present within me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” This is the cry of a converted person. He is struggling with remaining sins. He wants to live a holy life. Before conversion, there was no such desire in him but now things are different. He has been forgiven all his sins, and he has peace with God. The new nature in him causes him to desire to live in a way that is pleasing to God. But while in this world, he has to struggle with remaining sins. He will be made perfect only when he arrives in heaven. Remaining sins may have the occasional victory but, overall, the believer is able to put to death those sins. In other words, sin no longer reigns over his life. Although he cries out, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” he can also say truthfully, “I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:25)

Apart from struggling with sins within us, there are the trials and temptations from without. This is where we must be careful. We are redeemed from bondage to sin, and we need not succumb to sins anymore. Yet, the danger of falling back into the ways of the world is there. The people of the world treated you as a friend only when you were one with them - sharing in their liberal values and godless way of life. But when converted, you became the butt of their jokes and the object of their hatred. Their patronising respect and flattering words can hardly hide their disdain for you. We are not taken in by the hypocrisy of the world. There are believers who have not been careful, and along the way have become weary of holding up the faith. It is as though the constant taunt and temptation of the world have worn them out. They decided to give in to the ways of the world and, in fact, begin to relish in their past ways of life. We are not saying that Christians have to live a stoic and joyless life, for there are legitimate enjoyments that God has given to us. “The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.” (Ps. 24:1) But that is quite different from enjoying the world in an ungodly way. You know what that is. If you have succumbed, you will not be a happy person. You are made for better things. You will regain peace of mind, and joy in the Spirit, only when you repent from your backsliding. Do not allow the pressures of the world make you conform to it. Do not be

drawn away by its allurements. Do not be the keeper of the world's vineyard, and your own vineyard you do not keep.

Christ has transformed us

We must move on to the third, and last, point - we should desire the Lord because He has transformed us into new people. The picture before us changes so that the groom, who was earlier portrayed as a king, is now portrayed as a shepherd. He has many undershepherds - his "companions" - working for him. The undershepherds take care of the many flocks of sheep, yet all the sheep may be regarded as one flock, for they belong to the groom alone. Sheep needs green pasture, and they need shade when the sun is up. The shepherds who work under the chief shepherd, who is the groom, will ensure that all the sheep have ample to eat and drink. They will also ensure that no sheep is exposed to the discomfort of the hot sun, and possibly die. It would seem that the bride was herself a shepherdess, having to take care of her brothers' sheep. We are told, in any case, in verse 8, that she had some young goats with her. So, apart from tending their vineyards, she also had to tend their sheep. She had to veil herself, out of modesty, but also to protect herself from the sun. Here, she expresses her desire to be close to the groom, and to bring her flock of sheep to feed together with his sheep, and find shelter together with them. She does not want to struggle on her own, by the fringes of the flocks taken care of by the undershepherds, as a virtual stranger.

This is the desire of converted people - they want to be where the Lord is, and they want to be among His sheep. They know that in the Lord's presence, and in the midst of His sheep, there is abundance of food. This speaks of the blessing of hearing God's word preached, and being refreshed by the fellowship of the saints. Believers also know that they are safe when they keep close to the Lord. They feel comforted by His presence, even if the sun is blazing hot. We are referring to persecution and trials that come to Christians. You would remember how the three friends of the prophet Daniel were thrown into the fiery furnace, and a fourth character appeared in the furnace to sustain them. When the king called out to them, they came out of the furnace unharmed. But where was the fourth character? He had disappeared. Who was he? He was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ! The Lord had appeared as Man on many occasion in the Old Testament times. He continues to come near His people to protect them and to comfort them in the heat of persecution. It may not be His will that everyone of His children remain unharmed in any persecution, but He will certainly be close to them to comfort and strengthen them, even in the face of death.

You see now why believers desire to be near to Christ. It is because they have been transformed into sheep. They are no more goats. Their nature is being transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ. They delight in the things of God, in the company of God's people, and the hearing of God's word. They do not want to remain on the fringes of God's people, seeing them enjoy the Lord's presence and the abundance of His blessing, while missing out on these themselves. They do not want to be in a church where sentimental music and carnal entertainment have replaced the rich pasture of God's word. And they certainly would not choose the company of worldly people instead of God's people. Why choose to remain at the door when you can come into the banquet hall? Why see fellow Christians enjoy the blessings of the Lord while you nurse your imagined wounds and sulk in loneliness? Come to the Lord! Come into the presence of His people! Don't go hungry and remain lonely when there is abundance of food and fellowship to be enjoyed.

Conclusion

We must now summarise what we have learned. In the first part, we learn how Christians should desire Christ. Our desire for Christ should arise from His love for us, be focussed on His person, and be based on His redemptive work. In the second part, we learn why Christians should desire Christ. We should desire Him because He has made us righteous, redeemed us from our sins, and transformed us into new people. Now that these have been made clear, we ask, "Should we not desire Christ more in our lives?" Imagine a stream that flows to become a river. Trace the river to its source and you will discover that it begins with trickles of water that gather together more and more to form streams. The streams join so that the water flows faster and faster, cascading down the rapids to become a fast-flowing river. As the river moves into the valley, it slows down and become calmer. The volume of water, however, is bigger and the depth of the river is greater. This is like our Christian life. When first converted, we tasted the Lord's goodness and began to appreciate His love. There was

more zeal and excitement, as we learn and grow in the spiritual life. We then pass through the midstream of faith, when we are tested, sometimes severely, while we become more productive and effective in our service to God. Then, we arrive at the sunset years of our lives. Our zeal may appear to be less, but it is compensated by the greater depth and appreciation of spiritual experience. We certainly do not want to go astray, as has happened to some in the later years of their lives. There is no need for us to go astray. We want to stay close to our Lord. We want to know Him better, and we desire Him above all else.

How may we stay close to the Lord, and remain fresh in our relationship with Him? First, resolve to want Christ above all else. Second, remember with gratitude what we are now compared to what we were when unconverted. Third, reach out for Him - in faith, in prayer, and in His word - to know Him more deeply.

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