

Christ's Love For The Maturing Church (Song 7:1-9)

by BS Poh

In this book of allegory, the church that is well-loved by the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed as not only beautiful but also powerful. We may say that she is energized by the Spirit of God. Like chariots of war carrying willing and enthusiastic soldiers, the church desires to serve the Lord in the world. As the chariots begin to move, the onlookers come to the realization that they are being left behind. They begin to panic and call out to the bride in the words of Chapter 6:13, "Return, return, O Shulamite; Return, return, that we may look upon you!" This is a picture of adherents to the church who admire what Jesus Christ is doing in the lives of the believers, but would not commit themselves to Him. They say nice things about the church and are attracted to the Christian faith, but they are not prepared to commit themselves to Christ. The church would have to move on and pass these people by. We have been patient with them, answered their doubts, borne up with their criticisms, and helped them to the best of our ability. There comes a point when we cannot wait anymore. We do not want to be held back. We want to follow the Lord and do His work. We know that it will not be to our good if we stop and return to them. They will only gape at us, admire us, and say nice things to us. In practice, we will continue to be as patient as possible with them, but we do not want to be held back in our walk with God.

As the chariots begin to move, the other parts of the army stir, align themselves, and begin to move. The whole army is now marching on. This is a picture of the church actively serving the Lord. As you observe her, to your amazement you see not one army but two! They are marching in unison, heading in the same direction, to accomplish the same objective. There is actually one company of two armies - "Mahanaim", according to Chapter 6:13. One army is the church of Jesus Christ on earth, while the other army consists of the angels of God who help the church. The angels are there to help God's people. We are given the assurance that Jesus Christ will build His church and "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it". You can cut down a few believers here and there, and burn down a few churches and the Bible, but you will not be able to eradicate the Christian faith from the earth. God has determined that every one of His elect will be called into His kingdom by the gospel. The church will always exist on the earth until Jesus Christ comes again. Nothing can stop the spread of the gospel and the winning of souls to Christ. When the Christians in China were severely persecuted in the last century, and all foreign missionaries driven out of the country, everyone thought that the church there had been wiped out. However, when the country opened up again, to everyone's amazement, the Christian faith had spread and there were millions of Christians! The truth of what Tertullian, an early Christian leader, said had come true in China - "The blood of the Christians are the seed of the church. The more you mow us down, the more it shall grow."

Continuing from Chapter 6, we come to Chapter 7 in which Christ's love for the maturing church is described. There is a certain amount of repetition of what have been encountered in the previous chapters but, this time, we see the church portrayed as the bride who has matured. We are not saying that the bride has grown old, but only that she has matured. It is as though the young girl, whose beauty was already noticeable, has now grown up to be the truly beautiful lady that we

expected her to be. She is sweet, stable, and capable. She is ready for marriage. This is a picture of the church that is mature in understanding and experience. It is also the picture of the believer who has matured in the faith and is full of vitality and usefulness. This is not the picture of a person who is old in age, languid in life, and lacking in motivation for active service. Rather, it is the picture of a believer - whatever his or her age - who is well-grounded in the teaching of the Bible, gracious in character, and willing to serve the Lord. He can be entrusted with responsibilities, is well-developed all-round, and can do things efficiently.

As we study the chapter, we must note that a literal interpretation will lead to at least two major problems. Firstly, the description of the lady is grotesque and unacceptable. An example is in verse 2, "Your navel *is* a rounded goblet". A goblet is a round and deep drinking vessel with a handle. No lady would like her beauty to be focussed on her navel that is large, round, and deep like a goblet! Similarly, we are told, "Your waist *is* a heap of wheat". Is that the picture of a beautiful lady, whose waist bulges like a heap of wheat? Secondly, we are faced with the problem of carnal imagination. The book of Song is part of the Bible, which is the word of God. It is a spiritual book meant to teach truths that lead to faith in Jesus Christ, to stir up aspirations for holiness, and to instill godly living. However, if the book is taken literally, you will need to imagine a naked bride engaged in whatever carnal activities the mind conjures up. No, this is a spiritual book, intended for spiritual edification! We must interpret it as a book of allegory, following proper rules of Bible interpretation, so as not to go wild in allegorization.

I. The constituent parts of the mature church (vv. 1-5)

We consider, first, the constituent parts of the mature church, covering verses 1 to 5. Normally, we would draw the picture of a person starting from the head, down to the body, and then the legs. In the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream a magnificent image which is described from the head down. It has a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of partly iron and partly clay (Dan. 2:31-33). In our present passage, the bride is described from the feet up to the head. This must have been done deliberately, contrary to expectation, for a purpose. It must have been for the purpose of emphasizing the spiritual lessons taught in this passage.

The legs

We begin with verse 1, which says, "How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter!" How strange! Why should a lady's feet be regarded as beautiful? Even if they appear beautiful because clad in the beautiful sandals, it is still odd that the focus should be upon the feet. Yes, today there are those who compare the beauty of the legs of ladies, but we have yet to come across those who would compare the beauty of feet! Yet that is done here, but for a spiritual purpose. The Old Testament must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament. We are told in Romans 10:15, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" The feet that are beautiful would bring the gospel to others. These are the feet of a grown-up lady, who wears sandals - perhaps comparable to the shoes of Cinderella. This is not a young girl, nor a teenager. This is a seasoned young lady who has gone through much in life - taking care of her father's sheep and goats, and being bullied by her half-brothers to do their share of work (Chapter 1:8, 6). This is a lady who had experienced loss of assurance and backsliding. The watchmen of the city had been kind to her, and also beaten and humiliated her. This is the picture of a mature church, or a mature believer, who has undergone much trials, and has experienced the sweetness as well as the bitterness of spiritual growth. The mature church, or believer, is now focused on preaching the gospel and carrying out the Great Commission. This service to the Lord is seen as beautiful because it is carried out well - in accordance to biblical teaching, with the right motive, and efficiently.

Verse 1 goes on to say, “The curves of your thighs *are* like jewels, the work of the hands of a skillful workman.” The thighs of the bride are not fat and flabby, but lean, muscular and strong - as though carved by a skillful workman. In Chapter 5:15, the groom is described as having legs like “pillars of marble set on bases of fine gold”. Strong legs are necessary to carry the weight of the person. In this case, the preaching of the gospel requires travels to meet with people. Together, the feet and legs speak of mobility and strength. The mature church or believer does not want to be distracted from the preaching of God’s word, from winning souls to Christ, and from planting local churches. God’s work must be done in God’s way. The approach has to be biblical, the motives must be right, and the objective must be clear. There are those who attempt to preach the gospel in unbiblical ways, such as by appealing to the emotions or requiring the altar call. There are those who have the wrong motives of seeking for numbers to swell the ranks of the church or to compete with other churches and other religions. There are those who have the wrong objectives of extracting professions of faith from hearers or spreading the gospel thinly and extensively. Our aim should be to make disciples by the preaching of God’s word, followed by their incorporation into the life of the local church. The local church should also seek to plant other local churches. All these should be done with the motive of love for God and man. The mature church or believer will be beautiful in this aspect of the spiritual life, viz. in the carrying out of the Great Commission.

The abdomen

We move on to verse 2, to consider the abdomen: “Your navel *is* a rounded goblet; it lacks no blended beverage. Your waist *is* a heap of wheat set about with lilies.” The goblet is rounded, speaking of beauty and volume. We know that the sphere is the shape that takes the most volume. The goblet is used for drinks such as wine or fruit juice. Here, a mixed fruit juice is referred to. It is a beautiful and refreshing drink, able to quench and satisfy those who are thirsty. There is no ingredient missing. Everything is just right. Then, we have the waist that is compared to a heap of wheat. The wheat speaks of plentiful food. The lilies add beauty to the pile of wheat. It also speaks of service in the world. We have seen that believers in the world are like “a lily among thorns” (Chapter 2:2). The food found in the bride is laced with the beauty of service. Together, the drink and the wheat tells us of the plentiful and satisfying spiritual food found in the midst of the church or in the believer. Since the church or believer is mature in the faith, there is depth and proportion in the teaching found there. Anyone hearing the teaching in the church will be fed well with plentiful food that is deliciously prepared. It is like feasting at a banquet fit for a king. The person is not fed with watery porridge that is plain and unsatisfying. The mature believer is a wise teacher of the word, who is able to answer the questions of an enquirer. He has much to contribute and holds truth in proportion.

The ability to hold the truth in depth and proportion is so important. There are many Christians who lack depth of understanding in Bible knowledge and spiritual experience. They are what we regard as immature believers. There are other Christians who know certain aspects of truth well, but fail to hold all truths in proportion. They focus on some truths and neglect others, or they have been selective in their study of the Bible such that they become experts in some truths but lack knowledge in other important truths. For example, there are Christians who are experts on creationism over against evolution, or who emphasize the importance of the family to the point of almost idolizing it. These are unbalanced Christians who often upset others by their constant emphasis in their area of expertise. They become unhappy or disappointed when others do not share their areas of concern. Of course, some Christians need to specialize in some subjects, and other Christians have their areas of special interest. We need people who are specialists to counter attacks on the Bible and the Christian faith. However, such Christians are useful and helpful only if they are spiritually mature. Unbalanced Christians are not beautiful to behold, just like an athlete who has one arm twice the size of the other due to unbalanced training. A mature church or believer is balanced and proportionate. Earlier, the beauty of the bride’s legs have been praised. Now, the beauty of her abdomen is praised. This shows that souls won to Christ by the preaching of the

gospel will find plentiful food in the midst of the church. The mature believer is able to preach the gospel well and also to nurture the faith of the new believer.

The chest

We move on to verse 3 to consider the chest: “Your two breasts *are* like two fawns, twins of a gazelle”. As in Chapter 4:5, we must not focus on the literal breasts. We know that some artists like to paint half-naked women with their breasts exposed. Our purpose is to determine the spiritual meaning that is being conveyed. Just as the hair which covers the head represents the thoughts or doctrine of the person, so also, the breasts which lie on the chest point to the seat of emotion. The mature church or believer is not lacking in emotions, but the emotions are under control and developing well in a balanced and proportionate way. We know that the human personality consists of the three basic faculties of mind, affection, and will - all of which must develop well and proportionately. Otherwise, the person will become unbalanced. One who is highly emotional is unstable. One who acts rashly will regret his actions. One who is full of head knowledge but lacks consideration for others will appear harsh and self-centred. All three faculties must develop well and proportionately if we are to be stable and useful in the Lord’s service.

The mind is primary. We must know correct doctrine and allow our will and emotions to be regulated by what we know to be good, right and true before God. Here, the focus is on the chest, which is associated with the seat of emotion. It shows that the mature believer is full of compassion and love for others because he has tasted the goodness of God. We love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Love for God will lead to love for man. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” That is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-38). We are not talking about sentimental feelings. Instead, we are referring to the love, joy and peace seen in a mature Christian. What is seen in the Christian spills over in his interaction with others. James tells us that the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy (James 3:17).

The head

We now consider the head, which is described in verses 4 to 5. Verse 4 says, “Your neck *is* like an ivory tower, your eyes *like* the pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bath Rabbim. Your nose *is* like the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus.” No lady would like to be described like that! However, being an allegory, we must capture what is actually being taught. The neck is strong, reliable, and dignified. It holds up the head. Otherwise, the head will flop down like that of a newly born baby. It is milky white like ivory, adding dignity to the head that is held up high. The head is the centre of knowledge and control. It is held up high and firmly by the neck. We are reminded of the local church, which is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:5). The church functions as the pillar and the foundation, to uphold the truth. Similarly, the gospel is to shine on the lampstand. The lamp must not be hidden under the bed or in a basket. The light of the gospel is to shine far, and everywhere. Here, in the Song of Solomon, the neck holds up the head. This is to show the resolve and effort of the church in upholding the truth. For that to be done, the church has to be doctrinally clear and strong. The members have to be those who love the Lord and honour God’s word. It is in such a church that many souls find refuge, just like the mustard seed that has grown into a big tree, which now shelters many birds of the air (Matt. 13:31-33). Like a lighthouse that guides many ships to safety, the church that holds high the truth will guide many souls to the safety of God’s kingdom.

The eyes are described next. Unlike the earlier passages where the eyes of the bride are compared to the eyes of a dove, here, the eyes are compared to the pools, or fish ponds of Heshbon. The city of Heshbon was supposed to have a beautiful palace called Bath Rabbim which was surrounded by fish ponds. Today, many buildings around the world have pools in the garden. The buildings definitely look more impressive with the pools of water included, e.g. the Taj Mahal in India, and

Capitol Building at Washington DC. The temple in Jerusalem in the time of Jesus Christ also had pools in the garden. The clear water of such pools give the impression of calmness and tranquility. Spiritually, we would need to consider two factors, the effect and the function of the pools. The effect is peace and tranquility. The mature bride of Christ exudes a quiet confidence because she knows what she believes, and who she belongs to. She has a good grasp of doctrine, and seeks to behave biblically. She cannot be moved away from adherence to the time-tested doctrines of the Confession of Faith and the Catechism of the church, which are rooted in the Bible. She also knows that she belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has died for her and will never leave her. She will not flirt with the world, nor allow worldliness to spoil her spiritual beauty. Are we such a church?

The clear water of the pools also speak of transparency and receptivity. Light goes through. Light is received. We can see into the water. The church does not harbour sins, nor engage in clandestine activities that are shameful to reveal. Gospel work is to be done transparently, and the message of salvation is to be proclaimed “openly to the world” (John 18:20). Money for gospel work must be handled carefully to avoid quarrels which divert our attention from serving the Lord. Individuals involved in gospel work should be able to say honestly, “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel” (Acts 20:33). Of course, we do not have to reveal to the world all our plans and what we have been doing. There are those who have no right to know privileged information. We are to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16). In a digital age, we are to be extra careful what we reveal to those who have no right to know, so that gospel work is not harmed or hindered through our carelessness. There is value in being transparent, and information must be spread for the benefit of others and in order that others can pray intelligently for us. But the Lord has warn us that we are “as sheep in the midst of wolves”. Beware of what you post on Facebook and other social networking sites!

The clarity of the pools also speak of receptivity to teaching. The eyes are the windows of the body, allowing light to come in. The Lord said, in Matthew 6:22, “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.” We claim to have good eyes, which allow light to come into the body. The question is, “What sort of light do we allow into our body?” All too often, we watch too much television, we read too much of the news of the world, and we hear too much of the views of worldly people. There is such a thing as “acquired tastes”. By immersing yourself in the world, and drinking in too much of the views and values of unconverted people, you have acquired a taste for worldly things. Every faithful pastor is concerned for church members who are content with attending church only once a week. What you learn from the Bible is minimal compared to what you have been exposed to in the world. We are not saying that everything in the world is necessarily bad, but you have grasp the point we are making. The situation is made worse by those who are unteachable. We expect those who have learned much to continue learning. Otherwise, you will stagnate and become stale spiritually - like the Dead Sea, with its high concentration of salt, which does not allow anything to grow. We are to be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13, 14). We can maintain our proper saltiness and keep the light shining only if, at the same time, we are “a garden enclosed” (Song 4:12). In the garden enclosed, the Lord and His people are present. We are immersed in a spiritual atmosphere. We are fed spiritually from God’s word, and we are strengthen by our fellowship with other believers.

We see, now that the eyes of the bride are compared to the pools in Heshbon for good reasons. The mature church or believer is calm and tranquil because of her spiritual maturity. She is bright and clear, showing her purity of life and teachability in character. Are you such a Christian?

We move on to the nose, which is also described in verse 4, “Your nose *is* like the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus.” By this time, you would have been convinced that this is a book of allegory. Otherwise, you will have to put up with this description of the bride’s beauty, which is not

at all flattering! Next to the eyes, the nose is the most fussed over part of the face. Plastic surgery is performed on the eyes and the nose of many a rich lady for beauty. Here, the Tower of Lebanon appeared to be the chief landmark in Damascus. It was noticeable from a distance to any traveller heading toward the city. Cities tended to be sited on hills or high ground for strategic reasons. We are reminded again of what the Lord said in Matthew 5:14, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.” The church bears witness to the Lord by holding high the word of God in a spiritually dark world. It is a place of refuge for the many confused people, and the many bruised and broken souls, of the world. The light of the gospel is a welcome sight to weary travellers. As we point people to Jesus Christ, they will find rest in Him, for He has said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matt. 11:28).” Are we such a church?

We come, finally, to the hair, described in verse 5, “Your head *crowns* you like *Mount Carmel*, and the hair of your head *is* like purple; a king *is* held captive by *your* tresses.” We have noted that the hair of the bride represents the thought life or doctrine she holds to. In Chapter 4:1 and Chapter 6:5, the bride’s hair is described as like a flock of goats coming down Mount Gilead. We have assumed that the colour of her hair is black, like most goats. We know that sheep are generally white, while cattle are generally brown. The bride’s hair could have been of another colour, but the important point being made is that her thought life is orderly and full. She is a lady who is willing to submit to the authority of her husband. She is clear and orderly in her thoughts, allowing her life to be controlled by truth rather than by emotions. In the present passage, the colour of her hair is clearly mentioned as purple, or covered with a piece of purple scarf. In western countries, purple is the colour of royalty, just as yellow is the colour of royalty in the East. This has been the case since time immemorable. In the Gospels, the Lord was clothed with a purple robe by the soldiers in mockery of Him as “the King of the Jews”. The bride is so beautiful and dignified that the king is moved with love for her, who is fit to be his queen.

This high view of the church should not be lost sight of by believers in all generations. The world may despise the church and persecute the Christians, but the Lord looks upon her as most beautiful and loves her dearly. The church is purchased by the His blood and belongs to Him. Harming God’s people is like striking Him in the pupil of His eye. “He who touches you touches the apple of His eye”, says Zechariah 2:8. Being well-loved by the Lord, the church should submit herself to the constant cleansing of His word so that we may be presented to Him as “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:26). The church should be clearly seen as separate from the world, although she is in the world. She belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. She cannot afford to be worldly. Sadly, this is the situation with many churches today. There was a time when doctrine was watered down in many churches. Then, the worship services began to incorporate worldly elements. This was accompanied by worldly methods of evangelism. Today, even the church buildings are made to appear like karaoke lounges with space-age designs. The aim is to be “relevant”, to attract the youths, and to be seen as being up-to-date. It all began with the head, i.e. with the doctrinal and teaching aspects of church life. When the centre of knowledge and control was infiltrated by the world, it did not take long for the rest of the body to be infected. We would issue a call to those who are caught up in such churches - “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you (2 Cor. 6:17).”

II. The overall beauty of the mature church (vv. 6-9)

We now come to the overall beauty of the bride, and how it affects the groom, covering verses 6 to 9. Now that each tree has been examined in detail, we must stand back and look at the forest as a whole. As the Lord looks upon the mature church or believer, He is pleased with her. Why is this so?

Accepted for what we are

Firstly, it is because the church or believer is what she is. We have often heard the expression, “to be accepted for what you are”. We have been accepted by the Lord despite being unworthy. The Lord continues to take delight in the church for what she is. Verse 6 says, “How fair and how pleasant you are, O love, with your delights!” To recognize beauty is one thing, but to be delighted with what is beautiful is another. A young lady may have physical beauty, and even beauty of character, and is admired by many. Her beauty might excite the selfish desire in some to want to have her, but she is out of bounds to them. Here comes her grandmother, who has nothing selfish as she shows forth her delight in her beloved grand-daughter! You can see the difference in the two situations. The Lord has made us what we are, and He continues to sanctify us by His word. As we grow in spiritual maturity, and become balanced, proportionate and useful, He takes great delight in us.

Bears the family resemblance

Secondly, the Lord takes delight in the church or believer because she bears the family resemblance. She has spiritual life and, therefore, produces spiritual fruit. She is godly and is like her Father in heaven. She is taking on more and more the image of Jesus Christ. Verse 7 says, “This stature of yours is like a palm tree, and your breasts *like* its clusters.” In the desert, palm trees provide shade and fruit. Where there are palm trees, there is bound to be water. That is because palm trees grow well in oases and places which have an underlying water table. In the Bible, the fruitful palm tree is a picture of the righteous man of God who is useful in God’s service. Psalm 1:1-3 says, “Blessed *is* the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight *is* in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper.” The Lord takes delight in such believers.

His workmanship

Thirdly, the Lord takes delight in His fruitful church because of what He has put in to make her what she is. This is like a farmer taking delight in the trees he has planted and nurtured. In verse 8, the groom utters these words, ‘I said, “I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches.”’ A fruit tree that bears no fruit disappoints the farmer. A fruit tree that bears plentiful fruit delights the farmer to the extent that he wants to climb up to get some fruits for himself. The Lord speaks of the need for fruitfulness often. In the Parable of the Sower, the seed that fell on good ground bears fruit and produces: “some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matt. 13:8). The Lord expect faithfulness and a willing heart in our service to Him. Furthermore, that is possible only if we abide in Him, as He says in John 15:5, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” Throughout the book of Song, we have seen how the bride struggled to keep near the groom, depicting the struggles that a believer goes through in his spiritual growth. Now that the bride has grown to maturity, she is producing much fruit. This is not to say that mature believers are spared spiritual struggles. We are only saying that the spiritually mature believer is more stable in the faith and more useful in the Lord’s service. The Lord takes delight in such a believer.

Edifying to others

Fourthly, the Lord takes delight in the believer who is spiritually refreshing and edifying to others. The second half of verse 8 and verse 9 say, “Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, and the roof of your mouth like the best wine.” One who has eaten apples will have fresh breath. One who has drunk wine will smell of the wine. We do not have to argue over whether it is right for believers to drink wine, and how much alcohol must be in the wine before its consumption is regarded as sinful. We just briefly note that drunkenness is

condemned in the Bible and it has led to much misery in many families in many cultures, even up to today. We must focus on what is taught in the present passage. The mature believer is fruitful in His service to the Lord. Since the breasts refer to the seat of emotion, while the mouth and the breath refer to the words that are uttered, we conclude that the mature believer is full of compassion towards others and his words comfort and strengthen others. There are people who are caustic, whose every word pieces your heart, leaving you smarting each time you meet with them. Such people are very unedifying to be with. Of course, we would not want to be with those who have the opposite effects upon us - those who flatter you and say things that make you wary because the devil is lurking behind those words, to puff you up in pride so that you would fall before too long. No, here is a believer who ministers comfort and encouragement to others in a most natural way. He is very edifying to have around. The Lord takes delight in such a believer.

Conclusion

We must now stand back and ask ourselves two questions as we close. Firstly, are we the type of believers described in this passage? They seem to be a rare species of people today, but they may be found. Such people are knowledgeable, humble and refreshing to have around. They are non-judgmental, compassionate, understanding, and edifying to others. Look out for them. They are the Lord's precious children. Then, looking at it from the corporate point of view, are there churches like that today? Are we such a church? May the Lord make us to be such!

Secondly, should we not be aspiring to be such believers, and to be such a church? There are many Christians who are so inconsistent in their walk with God. They are full of zeal for a moment, and then lose their zeal. They are interested in learning for a moment, but soon lose the interest. They are helpful in the church, but quickly lose their concern for the welfare of others. Are you such? Should you not commit yourself to the Lord, and learn to be more consistent? How are we to grow to spiritual maturity if we are so inconsistent? Let us be persevering in our walk with God. Let us be consistent Christians.

As we close, we want to be reminded of the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3:12-14, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

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