

The Cross in the Song of Songs

Part Three: Black and Radiant!

Song of Songs 1:5a: "I am black, but comely"

"I am dark and beautiful"

"Yes! I am black and radiant"

Psalm 19:5-6 "Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

In Song of Songs 1:5 we find the Shulamite declaring that she is black yet also beautiful. Oftentimes when someone speaks of their lack, they are filled with a sense of depression and failure. Yet with this lady there is a sense of joy and even excitement. We hear this same tenor of heart in Paul when he said, "I am crucified... nevertheless Christ lives in me!" (Gal. 2:20). The phrase "I am black" could be referring to the fact that there is "no good thing in our old fleshly nature" (Roms. 7:18). Many people see their own flesh as beautiful and godly, therefore finding no need for the beauty of Christ within. But after a season of working hard for the Lord under the extreme heat of sun/Son (as we saw in Ecclesiastes), we begin to see that we are unable to fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2) and melt under the pressure. The more we labor to be good and act right, the worse it gets (Roms. 7:17-19). Life under the Son has exposed the Shulamite's inward selfish motives (Psalm 19:6b). She has found herself utterly black and corrupt as she sees the contrast between her life and the life in her Groom/Christ (Roms. 7:18a). She no longer clings to her own righteousness but chooses to embrace Him as her life. Her beauty is now derived from "Another". She is no longer the source of her own virtues or her own beauty. Her "blackness" has not brought her into depression and self-loathing, but rather the wonder of being found in Him, the Son, Who is all her righteousness (Phil. 3:9). In a very real way, this crisis has caused her relate to her Beloved as one who is joined/ married rather than one who is separate and living from their own resources.

Because we love the Lord our desire is to be beautiful to Him. We experience a crisis when our flesh is exposed and that which we held before God as our beauty is

found to be so very ugly. We fear yielding to the penetrating work of the cross that exposes our “blackness”. It is never pleasant to see reactions and motives of utter corruption come forth from deep within! Many choose to hide from their own flesh simply to escape the sense of shame they feel as the cross exposes their selfishness. But this Shulamite is past all the blubbering of her own conceits. She is liberated by her lack and driven into deep and wonderful identification with Him Who is becoming her beauty, her all. Truly, it is worth it all to be found in Him, having nothing but Christ as our everything!

Song of Songs 1:5b "I am black but comely. O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon."

Here she is declaring that the deep in-working of the cross is forming her into HIS habitation. The exposure of her blackness has prepared her for what is truly beautiful in His eyes. She is now likening herself to the curtains of his tent. She sees herself as a tent that houses Him, covering Him like the curtains within which He dwells. She no longer sees herself as the one filling her tent, but now He is the resident within her. She is now identifying as His vessel and declaring Him to be the treasure inside (II Cor. 4:7).

Before, she was His worker, His preacher, and His vineyard keeper. Now she is His house, a member of His Body, and a vessel filled with His Life. She is in a new relationship with Him based on union. The blessed door into that relationship has been her death with Him, not her beautification for Him or a personal spirituality that sets her above the other virgins. She no longer preaches herself but Christ (II Cor.4:5). He is the treasure and she is His container. Therefore, she glories in the Cross of her own crucifixion, for this blackness of her own death has brought her into the brightness of His Life shining in and through her.

"She is liberated by her lack and driven into deep and wonderful identification with Him Who is becoming her beauty, her all."

*Song of Songs 1:6 "Look not upon me, because I am black,
because the sun hath looked upon me:*

*"Will you disrobe me with your stares? The eyes of many morning suns have pierced
my skin, and now I shine.. black as the light before the dawn."*

Once again, the stares of her accusers try to tear her away from the wonder of new found union. They want to take away this garment of grace whereby she is now clothed with Christ and not her own righteousness, and bring her back to the realm of works with them where they dwell. Her response is from her heart and not the realm of doctrinal correctness as she cries out, "I am in this condition because the Son is being revealed in me as my life. His appearing makes manifest my black state and pierces through all my self-glorifying. God's glory has pierced through the vanity of my own goodness, and revealed the Son Who truly radiates Life. Many morning suns have pierced my skin as the Day Star Himself continues to be un-veiled in me (II Pet. 1:19). In His Light I am undone for now I know that I am crucified that Christ might be my life. It is no longer I but Christ who is living through me. The dark hour of discovering my blackness and embracing my crucifixion with Him has hastened the coming forth of His Life in me, like the darkest hour that comes before the dawn (II Peter 1:19).

She has no time for melting under the stares of her accusers, those who want her to make a fair show in the flesh so that she too might escape the true circumcision of the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:12). Rather than joining with them in their religious show, she speaks to them in a way as if to draw them into the wonder of her new discovery. The cross is her new best friend, for it is bringing her into blessed union with her Beloved. To them the cross is offensive, but she wants them to see in her the wonderful in-working of Calvary. Her blessed awakening is not centered on just the discovery of her dreadful black flesh, but that through embracing the cross of her own crucifixion she is being liberated into the realm of Life in the Son.

*Song of Songs 6b "And I have faced the angry glare of others,
Even of my mother's sons who sent me out
To watch their vines while I neglected all my own."*

Rather than being encouraged and drawn by this declaration, her brothers and sisters are angered and demand for her to leave this state of grace in union and return with them to the fields of self-effort.

The topic of focus to her angry brethren is the keeping of vineyards. Those around her feel as if they are the keepers of the vine, and want her to keep vines with them. She is declaring that He is her vine and she is His branch. She wants to abide in Him, trusting His Life to keep her as the Vine gives Life to His branches, rather than her trying to do and be something for Him apart from Him. She wants to continue in the spirit and not return to the flesh as her way (Gal. 3:3).

As so now she feels alone. Those around her do not want to proceed through the Cross into union. Yet she needs to feed, to eat so she may grow in grace and the Life of her Beloved. So she asks...

*Song of Songs 1:7 "Tell me, my love, where you feed your sheep
And where you rest in the afternoon,
For why should I go searching blindly
Among the flocks of your friends?"*

*"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest,
where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon;
for why should I be as one that turneth aside
by the flocks of thy companions?"*

Here she asks of Him for pure pastures in the realms of His Life. She wants to know where He finds rest and where He feeds those who have found Him in resurrection (at noon). She does not want to walk separate from those who are dwelling in His Life and functioning as His Body (His companions). She longs for fellowship and rest with those who feed on the Lamb in this new-found way of union.

*Song of Songs 1: 8 "If you don't know, O lovely woman,
Follow the tracks that the sheep have made
And feed your own little goats and lambs
In the fields where the shepherds lie."*

He answers her by directing her to those who have chosen the way of the Cross and Christ as their life. These have made tracks for her to follow in. They have lived as examples of Christ dwelling in His Body and the Cross as the Way. She obviously has those she is responsible for; her own little lambs to feed. She is concerned not just for her own growth and nourishment, but for theirs also. She must feed them in these paths and realms of Life that she herself is just now discovering.