

Hungering Conference 2009 Session 4
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The Cross In Relation To The Refining, Threshing and Winnowing Processes Part One

Opening Prayer

“Father, may Your Son live through earthen vessels. May You not find us hiding Him like a Seed in our pocket, but rather may You receive through us a mature and fruitful harvest of Your Son. May He come forth to Your pleasure, Father. May the Word of God do more than bear witness to our souls, but also be a light to our feet as we walk the path of Christ being formed in us. We desire that this sharing would not just be a message, but that it would resonate so deep in our being that we might more easily yield to the process necessary for the life of Christ to be formed within. Father, for You to receive a mature harvest of Your Son is going to require a process; so open our hearts and ears that we might prepare ourselves for the process of Christ being formed in us. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.”

What is Going On?

Luke 22:33-34 “And Peter said unto Him, Lord I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death. And Jesus said to Peter, The cock shall not crow this day but you shall three times deny that you know me.”

Job 1:8 “And the Lord said unto Satan, Have you considered my servant Job? That there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man?”

Song of Solomon 4:15-16 “A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon. Awake o' north wind, come thou south wind, blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out.”

1 Samuel 19:2 “And Jonathon told David saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill you David.”

Here we have several accounts of those who are beloved of the Lord in strange situations. We have those who are passionately pursuing God, yet getting very unexpected responses from God. They are pursuing God and they are beloved of God, but some strange things are happening in their lives and God is allowing it. God is telling Peter, (His committed disciple), that he will surely fail Him three times. God is bringing Job, (His faithful servant), to Satan's attention. The Shulamite, (a picture of the Bride of Christ), is discovering that God is sending a storm her way. God is allowing David, (His anointed king and a man after His own heart) to flee for his life from the murderous Saul.

A Honeymoon on the Harvest Field

I have friend who also found herself in a very unexpected situation on her honeymoon. The following is her account of her honeymoon. “I was going on our honeymoon and my husband was taking me to work in a harvest field for first part of our time together. To say the least I was unsure about the whole idea, but on the airplane God started to speak to me. God assured me that His Life was in my new husband and I could trust him. Once I accepted this my attitude changed. The first two days I took photos

of the harvest and I learned how to drive an eight-wheeler tractor with trailer. The last three days I drove the tractor and trailer ten hours everyday, ...on my honeymoon! At any interval I read "Fruitful Living" by Jessie Penn Lewis. It is about the journey of a seed. I found it for ten cents at a thrift store. Sitting on a tractor in the middle of a harvest field reading this book I slowly came to realize that threshing is important to God. And more so it is the intimate part of the relationship with Boaz. During the harvest my husband walked up to me in the field and said, "God our Father is the great combine harvester!" Against everyone's and my own better judgment, I thoroughly enjoyed my honeymoon."

A Definition of Threshing

Here is a technical explanation of threshing: Threshing is the process of loosening chaff from the seed. The chaff is the husk surrounding the seed. Winnowing is separating and blowing away that loosened chaff from the seed. Threshing may be done by beating the grain using a flail on a threshing floor; however in developed areas it is now mostly done by machines, usually by a combine harvester. This machine both threshes and winnows the grain. Another traditional method of threshing is to make donkeys or oxen walk in circles on the grain on a hard surface. A modern version of this in some areas is to spread the grain on the surface of a country road so the wheels of passing vehicles may thresh the grain. An old tool used in threshing was called a "tribulum", and its name is taken from the word "tribulation". This name is appropriate because tribulation is part of the threshing process.

The Threshing Floor Is Our Honeymoon Suite

We all have our ideas of what a honeymoon should be like that may involve concepts such as: "romantic, relaxing, intimate, warm fuzzy feelings, and exotic locations". Now let us consider what God's idea of a honeymoon might be. His idea of a honeymoon could involve a time of separating His wife from her old ways, removing her old life, and winnowing away her old identity. It would be the joy of His heart to bring her into His image and form her as a vessel of His expression, habitation and Life. God's idea of a honeymoon could sound more like a threshing than a romantic getaway. So we have our concept of honeymoon and God's concept. A honeymoon is what happens after a union has taken place. It is what occurs after someone is 100% accepted forever! In our union with Christ, based on the finished work of His Cross, this process of conformity happens after we have already been made completely one with Jesus. We are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 2:6), and all issues concerning our acceptance are settled in the heart of God. Christ loves the Church and gave Himself for her, even unto the death of the Cross (Eph. 5:25). Yet our thought is, "If I am beloved of the Lord, in union with Christ, one with Jesus, and a part of His bride and body; then He should treat me a certain way according to my idea of honeymoon." So when things do not go the way we expect them to go we can become confused, offended and deeply discouraged. We can misunderstand the incredible love within the heart of our eternal Groom and fail to see how that love is motivating Him at all times.

Think It Not Strange

Now Peter personally experienced these "strange" events in his own walk with the Lord, and his epistles live on today to speak to our hearts concerning these things. Peter was beloved of the Lord, yet Peter went through many bitter trials. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:12, "*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you as some strange thing happened to you.*" So here we have a scripture that is addressed to those who are beloved of the Lord, but the word "strange" occurs twice in it.

Did you know strange and unexpected things can happen to the beloved of the Lord? Did you know that these things do not have to be outside of His perfect love, care and eternal purpose (Roman 8:28-29)?

My friend probably “though it strange” sitting on that tractor threshing grain during her honeymoon. I bet she went through a little bit of struggle in her mind. Thoughts may have come to her such as, “Does my husband really love me? Why am I in the middle of a threshing on my honeymoon? If my husband really accepted and loved me, I would be sitting like a queen in some exotic location in a honeymoon suite.” Until she saw the Lord's heart, she might have “thought her circumstances strange”. But then she understood the incredible thing that God had privileged her to see in type and shadow on her honeymoon. She began to behold the eternal heart of the eternal Groom and how He sees, receives, loves and matures His Bride into His image. Her heart opened to the Lord and she began to join with God and her new husband in their purpose for more of Christ. She began to learn about Jesus in ways she never knew that are changing her life right now and helping her in her walk every single day. Likewise, may we be those who find the eternal purpose of our Bridegroom's heart and join with Him. May we understand all things that happen to us according to the deep longings in the heart of Jesus concerning His desire towards the Church. May we embrace the eternal purpose behind our union with Christ.

As those now in union with Christ we can choose to leave our father and mother in regards to our old creation identity. We can choose to leave our concepts of what Christianity should be like according to our “happy honeymoon” ideas. We can join with God in His mind, way and eternal plan. Our hearts will burst with joy just to be with Him in His purpose, even if that puts us in the middle of a threshing field. We can know the Lord's heart and cleave to Him in His purpose. As we join with Him in true oneness we will begin to let go of the chaff of our old life and nature, and find our New Life in the Pure Seed of Christ being formed within (Gal. 3:16).

Ruth

Ruth is a beautiful picture of this Bride heart. In chapter three of the book of Ruth we find a picture of Ruth coming to Boaz in the harvest-field and seeking him out on the threshing-floor. Ruth 3: 2-5. *“And now is not Boaz of our kindred with whose maidens thou wast. Behold he winnoweth barley tonight on the threshing-floor. And it shall be when he liest down, that thou mark the place where he shall lie and thou shall go in and uncover his feet and lay thee down.”*

Eventually we must leave the relationship of Jesus always having to come to us where we are and demanding that He must minister to us in our tent. In the book of Ruth, Boaz is working in the harvest field. Boaz is also working in the threshing-floor. Let us consider specifically what Boaz is doing in the threshing floor. He is separating the wheat from the chaff; dividing the true Seed from stuff that looks right, but it is chaff. In his work Boaz gets weary. Boaz does not go home, but he lays down on the threshing-floor because his heart is there with the dividing. His heart is with the harvest, that it will be threshed and pure, and not be this mixed thing. But the work is long and hard. Boaz lies down and covers himself with his blanket and goes to sleep. All of the sudden he feels the presence of somebody. His blanket goes up and somebody slips under it at his feet. He looks down and it is Ruth. She has been one of many workers that all worked in the harvest field and had the ministry of the harvest field. But Ruth busted a move. She sought out Boaz on the threshing floor and when she did that, Boaz knew. She did not kneel beside him and

say, "Excuse me Boaz, wake up! I need some handfuls of extra blessings. I have come to get some stuff from you that makes me happy." Rather, she positioned herself to be with him in the threshing process so that he could bring forth the harvest and bride that he desired.

Cleave to the Lord

Paul said to believers in Acts 11:23, "*Cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart.*" We must cleave to the Lord according to the purposes of His heart and stay with Him through everything. We must stay with Him in the threshing process. There is a cleaving to Jesus' heart when we are in the threshing and tribulation that is involved in bringing forth Christ.

Jeremiah 2:2 shows the effect this cleaving has on the very heart of God. Listen to Jeremiah's words, "*Go and cry, cry in the ears of Jerusalem, Thus saith the Lord. I remember you in the kindness of thy youth, in the love of thy espousal when you went after me in a wilderness, in a land that was not sown.*"

We need to cleave to Jesus when we are yet un-threshed, when Christ is unformed in us, and we are a barren wilderness. We may see our flesh immersing like chaff and dross causing us to feel like a disaster; but we can still love Jesus and press in to be conformed to His image. We are going to go after God until we awake in His likeness (Ps. 17:15)! We are going to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart like Ruth did with Boaz until He threshes us into His image. Hallelujah, this glorious gospel must become Christ's Life formed and mature in us, or what do we have (Col. 1:27)? Yet there is a process we must go through everyday so that Christ can become life in us. And that process is what this sharing is about. When we love and cleave to Jesus this way it affects the Lord. God remembers it and cherishes the memory of that first love. It ministers to Him. It may not be the fruit of Christ's Life through us yet, but the heart that ministers to God and cleaves to Him in all seasons will eventually bring forth Christ (Jn. 15:4).

In Sickness or In Health

Wedding vows say, "In sickness or health, for better or worse... we are going to be together." That is just an earthly shadow and type of Christ and His church. In sickness or in health, threshed or un-threshed, we are one with Jesus and we are going to be with Him. We are going to be with Him in the dark night of our threshing until Christ be formed in us because we love Him. We love Him more than our own life that we are going to lose in that process. The affliction and tribulation we go through in the process is unworthy to be compared to the gain of Christ in us; the eternal weight of glory formed, the Gold of Christ that comes from the refiners fires (II Cor. 4:17).

According to Isaiah 54:5 our husband is our maker. "*For thine maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, the redeemer, the holy One of Israel.*" We must comprehend with our hearts that the One who threshes us and lets us go through the purifying fire is our Husband and we are His beloved. This is the process He uses to bring us into maturity, to bring forth His image in us. May the Holy Spirit awaken us to our need for Christ to be formed in us, and may the Grace of God be with our spirits as we yield to the Father's work in our lives to bring forth His Son.

(Continued In Part Two...)

