Why Does Resolve Fail While Love Remains?

A bride comes to her beloved and asks him to set her as a seal upon his heart and upon his arm. Then she tells him why:

“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” (Song of Solomon 8:6-7)

In a few words, the bride places side by side death, burning coals, many waters that come over them, and a man who gives all the substance of his house. All of them speak about love. And this love shows what keeps the citizens of God's Kingdom standing. It is not their power to make decisions that keeps them standing, but a fire: love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The bride begins with death. Love, she says, is strong as death. Death is truly strong: no one ever comes back from it. Nothing is stronger than death. We understand how strong love is only as far as we are able, but the bride gives us a clear measure: love is as strong as death.

Then the bride speaks about the coals and the flame they give, a flame that comes from the Lord. Man did not kindle this fire. The Lord placed it in man, even in the natural man. Each of us has the capacity to love, a quality planted by God, which we are called to use. That is why the great question is not whether we love, but what we love. Where we love wholly, there we ourselves are wholly. The flame has been placed in every person, but love for Christ must be awakened and kindled in him.

After the coals, the bride speaks about waters. Why waters and floods? Because love is a fire, and waters come over a fire to quench it. In a person's life, the many waters are very hard trials.

A person makes decisions and is capable of a great many things. But when very hard trials come upon him, if he is not firmly anchored in what he should be, he falls. He grows weak and begins to think differently. Then he asks himself, "Why must I be so stubborn?" His resolve, however strong it seemed, does not hold out against these great waters. The bride does not say that the waters cannot quench a person's resolutions. She says they cannot quench love. Only love stands firm against the many waters.

The last person in the bride's words is the rich man. He brings out all the substance of his house and gives it to buy love. He receives nothing but contempt. Love cannot be bought. It must be kindled.

The Lord Jesus places a special emphasis on this fire. Love is what keeps us standing, the fire that does not go out. And He asks for it for Himself, above a person's closest loves:

“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:37)

The bride does not speak about a weak love, but about one strong as death. In the same way, the Lord Jesus does not ask for a half-hearted love. Without a love strong as death, we are not worthy of Him.

But what is it, in fact, that we love about the Lord Jesus? Not the things around Him, but His character. And this love changes the way a person lives:

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:6)

Why does a person live like this? Because the fire within him, the love of Christ, makes him like Him. The coals the bride speaks about do not stay hidden in the heart. They make a person keep going when the waters come, where resolve would have stopped.

This is how the citizens of God's Kingdom live. They love their King for the beauty of His character, and they keep His commandments out of love. Love leads them to enter into covenant with Him and to live as Jesus lived.

This fire must be awakened and kept constantly burning. For the one who keeps it burning, the bride's words are a guarantee: “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” (Song of Solomon 8:7) If we remain in this love, it will remain with us, however great the waters of trial may be.

The bride wanted to be a seal upon her beloved's heart, because she knew how strong love is. Love for Christ cannot be bought with all the substance of one's house, and it is not sustained merely by the power of our resolutions. It is kindled from the flame the Lord has placed in man, when a person looks upon the character of the Lord Jesus.

Ask yourself what you love wholly, because that is where you yourself are wholly. Do not lean on your own resolutions when the many waters come. Look at the beauty of the character of the Lord Jesus and let the flame placed in you by the Lord burn for Him. May the Lord awaken this love in all of us and help us to understand what we are called to.

Source: *Why Does Resolve Fail While Love Remains?* — Unmodified Word
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