

# ***LONGING – THE DIVINE GIFT***

***DEEP UNTO DEEP – DANA CANDLER***

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## **I. THE DELAY THAT LEADS TO GREATER DEPTHS IN GOD**

### **A. Deepening**

1. Our proneness both in our humanity and in our culture is to want things immediately and to not recognize the wisdom in waiting or the beauty of longing without instant answer. What we do not often realize is that *quick satisfaction* does not promote longsuffering and the deepening of desire or love, and these things are such a crucial part of our progression in intimacy with God. The Lord loves the process of delaying His answer in order to bring about greater love in us.
2. We see this understanding of the nature of God's leading in Song of Solomon 5:2 as the bride experiences the "rest of faith." She says, *"I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my Beloved!"* "I sleep" speaks of being in a place of rest with confidence in the Lord. She is sleeping in the sense of being completely at peace, because she believes that Jesus is a safe God. Her heart is fully awake. She is walking in obedience without any conscious area of compromise. How blessed to be "awake" without need of being revived from spiritual dullness (Eph. 5:14).

### **B. Delay**

1. There is always a strategic delay when we arise to meet God. It is a waiting that is divinely worked into the equation.  
***"But while the Bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept." (Matt. 25:5)***
2. In the parable of the ten virgins, they all slept but the wise kept their hearts awake, or alive, by continuing to acquire oil in the delay. The wise feed their spirit in the time of delay. They keep their secret life in God, their garden alive, even in the delays, or night seasons. Even in the natural parts of life, they do not forget Him. Though life must go on in the natural ways, they continue to stir themselves up in their spirit. The foolish virgins' response appears the same as the wise...yet when they arise with their lamps, how they lived is revealed. Their inward lives are either burning brightly or dimming in dullness.

***"I sleep but my heart is awake." S.S. 5:2***

***"Wisdom is vindicated by her children." Matt. 11:19***

3. Different forms of delays: the delay of His manifest presence upon my heart, the delay of His promises coming to pass, the delay of His Second Coming. Until He returns we are always in some form of the tension of delay.

## II. THE DELAY OF THE LONGING HEART

*Tell me, you whom I love, where you feed your flock and where you make it rest at noon. Why should I be as one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions? S.S.1:7*

### A. Surprising Delay

1. The young bride inquires of the Lord where He feeds His flock. She has just told the Lord that His love is better than wine. She knows His love far exceeds all other pleasures. Yet the mere acknowledgement of His love's superiority is not what will ultimately satisfy her hungry heart. Only He *Himself* can answer the craving in her soul.
2. She had not anticipated a delay in experiencing the pleasures of His love. This is only a surprise to her because she has not yet understood God's way. Longing and desiring God is part and parcel of the entire journey. Here she waits, ruined for lesser pleasures and kept from Divine consolations. He is cultivating longing in her heart. He desires more than a recognition of His greatness; He wants a desperation and lovesick yearning to come to maturity within her. This longing is not something that she will lose or simply pass through. It is characteristic of her entire journey into love. In fact, her very last words and the very last statement of the book is a statement of longing: *"Make haste, my Beloved and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices."* S.S. 8:14

### B. Tender Shepherd

*"If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds tents." S.S. 1:8*

1. He invites her to an act of humility by following those who have gone on before her. Then He intensifies this invitation by encouraging her to stay near to the Body of Christ in the fellowship of other believers and to not be given to isolation in this time.
2. Often when we feel such craving for God and do not perceive the same degree of desperation in the hearts of other believers around us, we pull away and distance ourselves, ending up in the danger zone of isolation.

### C. Lamb of God

Jesus is the Shepherd whom she asks where He feeds His flock, yet He is also the Lamb of God. He is the Shepherd because He became the Lamb. He knows our journey ahead because He has already taken it. We can trust Him perfectly because He Himself is the Lamb. As the Lamb of God, longing compelled Him through the valley of the shadow of death.

*"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul...Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil..." Ps. 23*

***“...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb. 12:2***

D. Pain of Absence

*“As created things furnish to the soul traces of the Beloved, and exhibit the impress of His beauty and magnificence, the love of the soul increases, and consequently the pain of His absence: for the greater the soul's knowledge of God the greater its desire to see Him, and its pain when it cannot; and as it sees there is no remedy for this pain except in the presence and vision of the Beloved, distrustful of every other remedy, it prays in this stanza for the fruition of His presence, saying: "Entertain me no more with any knowledge or communications or impressions of Your grandeur, for these do but increase my longing and the pain of Your absence; Your presence alone can satisfy my will and desire.”<sup>1</sup>*

### III. THE LONGING OF GOD

***“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me...” Jn. 17:24***

A. Formed for Fellowship

From the whirlwind of Trinitarian love – humanity was brought forth. Our existence emerged from the Desire of God. We were formed to be brought into the fellowship and the communion of the Trinity. Though we will remain the creation, He has willed (*Father I desire*) that we would with Him where He is.

***“...for the Lord's portion is His people.” Deut. 32:9***

***“...You shall be My special treasure.” Ex. 19:5***

B. God's Search

God is *searching* for something that He has positioned Himself to not have unless we choose to give it to Him. Jesus introduced the subject of the Father's searching, or longing, for worshippers with an invitation to quench His thirst. I find it no accident or simply a coincidence that He said to the woman at the well, “Give Me a drink” in the same moments that He spoke of the Father's search for true worshippers.

***“But the hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers will worship Him in spirit and in truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” Jn. 4:23***

***“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.” 2 Chron. 16:9***

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<sup>1</sup> Christ and His Bride, Cora Harris MacIlvay

***“The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart” 1 Sam. 13:9***

C. Divine Desire

1. Our desire for God is but an echo and participation in His *own* desire. Every longing for God we ever experience is held within the Great Desire of the God Man. We desire God because He first desired us. We long because He longs. Every desire we have for Him is not from our own heart but from *His*. Longing is the agreement of our beings with the heart of God. When we enter into our inheritance of this desiring God, we are participating in what has *always* been in His heart.
2. Understanding God’s own longing keeps us from our proneness towards offense or hurt towards God, thinking He must not understand our pain or He would come to us.

***“My soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in Your sanctuary to see Your power and Your glory...My soul follows close behind You...” Ps. 63:1, 2, 8***

D. Our Longings are Known by the Lord

***“Lord, all my desire is before You; my sighing is not hidden from You.” Ps 38:9***

He is the only One who can answer our longing hearts. Salvation belongs to the Lord (Ps. 3:8) He alone delivers us.

***“I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior.” Is. 43:11***

E. Echoes of Eternity

To long for God is to give witness to the Transcendent One. Longing is the echo of eternity within our souls. It is the evidence of things unseen. It is longing that makes us pilgrims on the journey. This world is not our home and our inner ache gives testimony to the brevity of life and the weight of eternity.

***“But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God...” Heb. 11:16***

***“I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide Your commandments from me. My soul breaks with longing for your judgments.... Ps. 119:19, 20***

#### IV. LONGING TO LONG FOR GOD

A. Beginning

1. We begin with the *longing to long* for Him and the yearning to desire Him. It is an awakening that *beckons* longing and paves the way for desire. We start to hunger for the grace to hunger. The *longing to long* is the escort into longing itself. It is the God ordained gateway into the true gift of God to crave Him with all of our beings.

2. *O God, I have tasted Thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the Triune God, I want to want Thee; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still... Amen.*<sup>2</sup>

**B. God's Answer**

1. Longing is part of God's answer to us. It takes God to love God and He Himself must place within us the love with which to love Him with. We imagine this gift to be only the actual *experience* of intimacy with Him. Yet the longing prior to this experience is just as much a part of loving Him as the experience itself.

***For it is God who works in you, both to will [desire] and to do for His good pleasure. Phil. 2:13***

2. Longing is part of love. It is the part that causes us to be desperate. It is the ache that enables us to do anything and give everything for the Object of our affection. If one has lost his longing, he has lost his way. For divine longing placed within us by the hand of God is our compass on the journey.
3. *I want deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.*<sup>3</sup>

**V. DESIRE; THE PRELUDE TO SATISFACTION REALIZED**

**A. Great Chasm**

To every heart set on this journey of love comes seasons of great pain due to an awakened heart not yet answered. God awakens longing for Himself within us and then very purposely delays the satisfaction of that longing. No longer contented by any other pleasure, we cry out for what we are certain He will give us: eternal love. Yet instead of divine satisfaction we find greater heart ache. We find ourselves caught in that great chasm between longing and fulfillment.

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<sup>2</sup> A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, p. 20

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

B.     *Where have You hidden Yourself,  
And abandoned me in my groaning, O my Beloved?  
You have fled like the hart, Having wounded me.  
I ran after You, crying; but You were gone.  
Oh! Who can heal me? Give me perfectly Yourself,  
Send me no more a messenger who cannot tell me what I wish.  
All they who serve are telling me of Your unnumbered graces;  
And all wound me more and more, and something leaves me dying,  
I know not what, of which they are darkly speaking.  
Why, after wounding this heart, have You not healed it?  
And why, after stealing it, Have You thus abandoned it,  
And not carried away the stolen prey?*<sup>4</sup>

C.     Necessary Ache

These periods of unfulfilled longing are inexpressibly necessary to love's process. How our hearts need to go hungry before we are fed. Of what worth is water without thirst? Of what value is fruitfulness without barrenness? What is desire satisfied without desire unmet? We must encounter the depths of longing's ache in order to ascend to the heights of divine exhilaration. Both the heights and the depths are LOVE.

D.     Proof of Presence

1.     This Divine wound originated in His heart and not our own. We often view our pain as the *absence* of God's answer instead of the *presence* of it. In truth, longing is *proof* that we are experiencing the presence of God. God does not give Himself except to the hungry of heart yet it is He Himself who causes hunger to arise and the prayer to emerge. *He establishes in us the desire that He intends to satisfy.*
2.     A Divinely implanted desire is nothing short of a Divine promise of the very thing we yearn for. Longing for the Bridegroom is a preparatory work that expands our souls. It creates the room for the gift of God's manifest presence, the space for us to embrace His love and revelation of who He is. He will fill us according to our capacity to receive.

***Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh...Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn...Lk. 6***

E.     Divine Enlarging

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<sup>4</sup> John of the Cross

1. If we are not careful we will misinterpret these times and possibly deny some of the greatest fruits to be born in the realm of intimacy. These seasons make a way for the seasons that we crave most. Though they appear to us as brick walls blocking our way forward, they are indeed *doorways* into greater love. Behind these periods of dryness is the flaming heart of the God-Man who in love who refuses to have a bride not stricken with lovesick desire.
2. One longing leads only to another. By deeper wounds of love we are comforted. When we begin to cry out to know Him and experience Him in deeper ways, we should not be surprised when He answers us by wounding us with greater longing. To know more of Him is only to want more of Him. With every answer and consolation He gives, we are brought deeper into Love's possession. Only with these greater woundings are our hearts enlarged for more of God. We must not be satisfied with a tiny ache, but always cry out for a greater entrance. We must cry, "O God, where my heart is too small, wound me more."

## VI. THE EMPTY SIDE OF LOVE

### A. Dry not Pointless

1. *"...at other times the love is perceived not as pleasant but as a painful yearning for what one seems not to have. Because painful, it is often perceived as no love at all, and yet it might be deeper and better than the pleasurable variety of prayer...Once again we point out that these empty-feeling yearnings are not nothing. They definitely are a communion with God, a given and received communion..."*<sup>5</sup>
2. *"...A dry empty-feeling yearning is part and parcel of this pilgrim enterprise. Scripture likewise knows of it and often returns to the theme of an arid but earnest desire. From the depths of the wilderness the Psalmist cries out to Yahweh that he is pining and thirsting for him and that his flesh is longing as a parched desert, lifeless and waterless; he longs to gaze upon his Lord and to experience His power and glory..."*<sup>6</sup>
3. We touch these places of frustration where the barrenness within us is crying out to be filled. Because we don't feel sweetness, as we think longing should feel, we assume that our hearts are only dry and unfruitful. One of longing's most common faces is emptiness. It is the dry side of desire and the empty side of love.
4. If we do not have an understanding of this arid side of longing, we will write off many a day for "wasted" when indeed it was rich with love. So often our moments of greatest love come out of the places of greatest dryness and barrenness. We set our will and choose love when no emotion or feeling comes to our aid.

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Dubay, *Fire Within*. p. 62

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68

5. *For I tell you this, one loving blind desire for God alone is more valuable in itself, more pleasing to God and to the saints, more beneficial to your growth, and more helpful to your friend...than anything else you could do.*<sup>7</sup>
6. *But when the Word has left me, all these spiritual powers become weak and faint and begin to grow cold, as though you had removed the fire under the boiling pot, and this is a sign of his going. Then my soul must needs be sorrowful until he returns, and my heart again kindles within me-the sign of his returning. When have had such experience of the Word, is it any wonder that I take to myself the words of the Bride, calling him back when he has withdrawn? For although my fervor is not as strong as hers, I am transported by a desire like hers. As long as I live the word return', the word of recall for the recall of the word, will be on lips. As often as he slips away from me, so often shall I call him back From the burning desire of my heart I will not cease to call him begging him to return, as if after someone who is departing, and I implore him to give back to me the joy of his salvation, and restore himself to me.*<sup>8</sup>

## **VII. LONGING: WHY IS THIS A MATTER OF GREAT RELEVANCE TO US?**

### **A. Kingdom Way**

The realm of longing and waiting for God is the way of God's Kingdom. Longing and the process of cultivating intimacy with God is God's way. The farmer waits for the harvest – desiring it to come. The Word of God is a seed that grows in us. The merchant seeks the pearl of great price. The bride waits for the Bridegroom with longing in her heart. Longing is the method by which God's kingdom is transferred - Heaven to earth. It's the means by which we are empowered for intimacy and ministry. We are empowered in intimacy with Jesus through this lovesickness. We receive power for ministry in the progression of hunger and desire.

### **B. Vulnerable to Attack**

One of the most common attacks of the enemy comes in this process where we are desiring God and experiencing delay in His coming to us. We have to know and recognize the accusations of the enemy in these times.

### **C. Response in the Delay**

1. How do we respond when our heart bursts with longing and no answer comes forth from Heaven? First we must seek to keep a right view of Jesus and to remember it is always *greater love* He is after. This keeps our hearts tender and not offended or unnecessarily wounded.

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<sup>7</sup> Cloud of Unknowing, p. 60

<sup>8</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, On the Song of Songs, Sermon 74

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2. It is so necessary to know the Divine motivation behind these seasons. He is not leaving us in the pains of love with any other incentive than love itself. Instead of whining, “O God, I have this tiny hunger, why aren’t You filling it?” Let us say, “O God! What kind of hunger are You worth? Give me more! Yet sustain me I pray in the process.”
3. He does not take pleasure in inflicting meaningless heart-ache upon us. Far from meaningless, these times are as *Divine agents* leading to greater love. When we can connect the present pain to the future depth of love, our hearts are sustained for the duration.
4. We must remember that longing is a preparatory work that expands our souls. He will fill us according to our capacity. We cannot enter into the fullness of love without these very essential enlargings of our hearts. We have tiny capacities and impatient souls. We have to learn God’s way.
5. We must drink deeply of these seasons of lovesick desire. *Our* responsibility is to let longing have its way within us. These times are rare gifts and we should seize them for their fullness rather than try to get by on as little as necessary. When we know that our current experience of heart ache is in the ultimate Divine plan, we can embrace them as they were meant to be embraced and allow love to have its comprehensive way within.