

## Dark But Lovely – Mack Tomlinson

"I am black [dark], but comely [lovely], O ye daughters of Jerusalem . . . look not upon me, for I am black."-- Song of Songs 1:5-6 This can be translated "I am dark, yet lovely"; what a contrasting statement and what a statement to bring one's self to even make. This is the confession of the bride to those around her and to the Bridegroom. It is a true statement, a true confession of what she is. And it is the confession of everyone who is part of the bride who loves this Bridegroom. It is true of every believer in Jesus Christ- dark, yet lovely. How true? Dark was our original state and condition in Adam, which we carried as our identity all our days until we were married to the Bridegroom.

How were we dark? 1) by nature- "we were by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3)2) in heart- "their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 1:21)3) in mind- "darkened in their understanding" (Eph. 4:18)4) by action and direction- "they grope in the darkness without light" (Job 12:25)5) by choice and devotion- "men love darkness rather than light"(Jn. 3:19)6) by works- "the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11) 7) by identity- "for you once were darkness" (Eph. 5:8)8) by eternal destiny and dwelling place- "they shall be cast into outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12)

Certainly we see that as a son of Adam's race, we were dark and must with humility say, "Yes, I am dark-- dark in myself; that is what I was by nature, by choice, in affections, in heart and mind-- I did love darkness rather than light because my deeds were evil; I was darkness, I groped in darkness, my mind and heart were in darkness, and I was heading into an eternal darkness of woe-- yes, dark is the right word about who I was and what I was. "BUT Not true anymore-- "dark, yet lovely"; is this not a contradiction? No, it is transformation; it is miraculous change-- change in nature, change in identity, change in place of residence, in allegiance and loyalty, a change in everything having to do with light and darkness.

The bride is now lovely. Is it arrogant or wrong for her to confess this if it has become true? No, for every lover of the Bridegroom can say the same thing the Bridegroom has said about them. In this song of songs, the Bridegroom over and over rejoices in her beauty to Him and calls her lovely. Such a view point and perspective is not foreign to the rest of the Bible, especially the New Testament.

For while we were darkness, the New Testament paints a different picture of us now-- our standing, our nature, and what is really true of us, not just our position or confession. How are we lovely now? We are now morally lovely because of the transformation that has taken place in our inner beings in a radical way. Lovely? Yes: 1) Our nature is now not one of darkness, for we have received a new heart; we wear not filth by nature anymore, but we have the very pure and perfect righteousness of another person, Christ Himself; In regeneration, we receive a new heart which is righteous and pure before God; in justification, we have a clean and perfect record of righteousness before God, as to our position before Him; this alone makes us lovely, as all our loveliness is of Him. 1) We have been "turned from darkness to light" (Acts 26:18). 2) We are not in the kingdom of darkness anymore, for we "have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. 1:13). 3) We are now actually called light, for "once you were darkness, but now are you light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:9). 4) "We

now walk as "children of light", and "we walk in the light, as He is in the light" (Eph. 5:8; I John 1:7). 5) The light has shined into our hearts, "giving the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). 6) Our path is one of light, as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day" (Pr. 4:18). 7) The Lord Himself is now our light, for "the Lord is my light and my salvation" (Ps. 27:1).

So we find this strange and seemingly contradictory statement, which is amazingly true because of amazing grace- we are dark, but lovely. In ourselves, we are nothing; in our beloved Bridegroom, we are accepted, perfectly righteous, delightful to God and to Christ, love perfectly and unconditionally, with never even one sin ever put to our account ever again. Dark? Yes; Lovely? Absolutely, because of the lovely one, our beloved Bridegroom, who loved us to the end. "Living He loved me, dying He save me, buried He carried my sin far away; rising He justified freely forever, some day He's coming, O glorious day!" We ought never to forget that we were dark; but we do not at all stay there or major on our previous condition of darkness; every Christian is now lovely in Him who has loved them, changed them, and given them a new nature and a new heart. So you can never say again, "I am dark" without also saying what is now the primary truth about you "Yet lovely". Dark, yet lovely-- what grace is this from such a Bridegroom. Does it not make you love Him more today?