

**Song of Solomon 3: 1-4; “Seeking the One I Love”, Sermon # 32 in the series –
“I am my Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
January 23rd, 2011, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

This afternoon, we want to follow the Shulamite as she seeks for the One that she loves. We want to identify ourselves with her in her search. For her search is our search; to find Christ; and to have a greater devotion to Him. “More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to Thee.” There are 3 reasons in the mind of our Lord why He does not always give us a sense of His presence. The 1st reason is that He wants to know how deep your devotion to Him goes. (Verses 1 and 2) The second reason is that He wants to know whether you will seek counsel from the watchmen. (Verse 3) And the 3rd reason is that He wants to know what you will do when you find Him. (Verse 4)

The 1st reason that you don’t always feel Christ’s presence with you is that that He wants to know how deep your devotion to Him goes. (Verses 1 and 2)

“By night on my bed I sought the one I love; I sought him but I did not find him.” “I will rise now, I said, and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I will seek the one I love.” “I sought him, but I did not find him.” She first mentions seeking him by night on her bed. Let us ask ourselves what this could mean? What does it mean by “night” here. I have, in the last sermon, said to you that this life, spiritually speaking, is a mixture of light and darkness; but that for the believer in Jesus Christ; “The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.”

The New American Standard translation has it: “The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.” By “night” I would understand that she was going through a time of spiritual darkness and difficulty. She feels that she has been left alone. She feels that she has been cast back upon her own resources. She had a yearning for Christ to be with her to help her because of discouragements that had come to her. Her soul was troubled and downcast. The prayer of her heart is one of the hymns that we sing.

“Abide with me; fast falls the eventide.” “The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide: When other helpers fail, and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O abide with me.” “I need Thy presence every passing hour; what but thy grace can foil the tempter’s power?” “Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?” “Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.” This is night in the believer’s experience; wrestling with the trials, the temptations, the difficulties, and the afflictions that come to them. And nothing can bring them comfort or relief in that night except Christ. This a believer knows, or they should know.

And so; often Christ’s saints seek their Beloved on their beds at night; whether it is spiritual night, or physical night. The two seem to go together. And this seeking is a good thing. The Lord Jesus wants to see and to know all of the longings of your heart for him. Does your devotion to Christ continue on in the night, when you lie down on your bed? Turn with me to Psalm 63, verse 1. “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.” “So I have looked for You in the sanctuary to see Your power and Your glory.”

Look down at verse 6 now. “When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.” “Because you have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.” “My soul follows close behind You; You right hand upholds me.” This is pure and true devotion, when the one who is seeking Christ does not stop seeking Him because they feel that cannot find Him right away. The picture of David given to us in these verses is of a man who is out in the wilderness of Judah, and Saul is seeking for his life.

What does David do in this night, and on this night? He declares that God is his God, and that he is going to early and earnestly seek Him. His soul thirsts for God and will not be satisfied until it is filled with the “rivers of living water” which he would drink from. His flesh longs for God’s

blessing, His leading him, His guiding him, and His coming to help him in this trying hour. He remembers God upon his bed and he meditates in the night watches upon all that God has done for him in the past. He sees God as One whom he can take refuge with; under the shadow of His wings. His faith is engaged in God, and he knows that he will receive the answer to his prayers because God's right hand is upholding him.

But what of the person whose faith is weak? Perhaps this is you. You do not have the strong faith in exercise which David did when he penned this Psalm. You seek him on your bed, but you do not find him. What do you do? Well, I think that our text indicates that you continue to seek. The Shulamite sought Christ on her bed, but she did not find him. She said to herself, "I will rise now, and go about the city and in the streets and in the squares I will seek the one I love." She thought to herself; maybe I have really been seeking my own ease and pleasure and have not been seeking him diligently enough. I won't lie on my bed any longer. I will arise.

Turn with me to Psalm 132 and you will David in a similar situation to this. "Lord, remember David in all his afflictions; how he swore to the Lord, and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob; surely I will not go into the chamber of my house, or go up to the comfort of bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob." Oh, how zealous was King David to see God have a place to dwell. But you and I must be just as zealous to see that our Christ has a place to richly dwell in our hearts.

Holy resolution is good when it relates to finding Christ. "I will arise and go to my father," was the prodigal son's cry in his heart. His was a resolve to repent. He would turn from his worldliness, his sensuality, His pride, his foolishness, and his self-sufficiency, to return home to His father. When he did return home he was received and entertained. The fatted calf was slaughtered and the best robe given to him, and a ring placed on his finger. He found what the father had prepared for him; he found Christ. Once he was lost, but now he was found. You should know that holy resolution is good when it comes to keeping close communion with your Lord Jesus Christ.

But the Shulamite of our text did have resolve. She could not find him upon her bed, so she resolved that she would arise and go outside of her own house; looking down the streets and in the squares, seeking the One whom she loved. She sought Him, but she found him not. What is the reason for this? She is using all the means at her disposal. She is faithful in attendance at church. She is faithful in taking the Lord's Supper. She is faithful in fellowship and in prayer, but still she cannot find her Christ. What is the problem? It is that the Lord is testing her faith; and she does not know it. It is that He wants her to reveal to Him whether the devotion of her heart is real; whether it is still there, when the sense of His presence is not. For that is true devotion.

That is the devotion which will prove that His grace is sufficient and really working in you. He would uphold you by grace when you consciously feel it the least. "He is faithful even if we are faithless, for He cannot deny Himself." Know, dear believer, that Christ is sovereign in His love visits. And He is sovereign in the times of testing your faith. But because He died for you and for your sins, you will learn to live by faith, and to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil. You will learn to yearn for Christ and to trust that He is with you even when you do not feel it to be so. He is there; trust Him. He is leading you; follow His lead, wherever your obedience to the Scriptures and His Spirit take you.

2nd – The reason that Christ doesn't always give you a sense of His presence is that He wants to know whether you will receive counsel from the watchmen. (verse 3)

"The watchmen who go about the city found me; I said, 'Have you seen the one I love?' Now the city which is referred to in this verse is the City of the Living God; the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain." "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." "God is in her palaces; He is known as her refuge." (Psalm 48: 1-3) "You

(believers) are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5: 14) “You are a city that is set on a hill, and it cannot be hidden.” The city is the Church. The watchmen who go about the city are those pastor-teachers and elders who are servants of the great King of that City, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament times the watchmen were the prophets of the Lord. You will see this if you turn to Ezekiel Chapter 3, verse 16. “Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: ‘When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die, and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.’”

“Yet if you warn the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.” “Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.” “Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.” What a commission Ezekiel had received, to be a watchman. He must watch for both the sins of the wicked man to warn him; and also the righteous man to warn him not to turn from his righteousness.

But now look over at the book of Hebrews Chapter 13, verse 17 and you will find the New Testament Church watchmen. “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.” “Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” These watchmen in our text “found” the Shulamite; she did not find them. The watchmen were “going around the city”. And “they found her.” In other words, they were attempting to be faithful ministers of the gospel and the word of God. And as they preached the word of God to her; they set forth to her the truth that her faith must be in exercise in order to find Christ and to keep His grace lively in her heart. They preached that the one who seeks Christ finds Him.

We can imagine that they probably shared verses with her; very much like the ones found in Proverbs Chapter 8, verses 34 and 35; verses which concern finding Christ. “Blessed is the person who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.” “For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord...” This very much applied to the Shulamite, and so she inquired of them, “Have you seen the one I love?” But they knew that they could not bring Him to her, on a moments notice. She must look beyond them to find Christ.

O what an important point is here for us. The believer who would find Christ must look for themselves, by faith, to find Christ. They should diligently attend to the means of grace; all the services of worship and the preaching of the Word and the counsel of the watchmen, in order to find Christ. All the means of grace should point to Christ, but only the exercise of faith can find Him. O may we each understand how important this is; to seek Him diligently for ourselves. Isaiah 26: 9 – “With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes by my spirit within me I will seek You early (I will seek you diligently) (NAS); for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” One who would know Christ will do this. And one who has become a Christian will use all the means of grace that they can to find Christ over and over again. But they will trust that Christ will make Himself known to their soul at just the right times.

3rd – There is another reason that Christ doesn’t always give you a sense of His presence, and that is that He wants to know what you will do when you find Him.
(verse 4)

“Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found the one I love.” “I held him and would not let him go, until I had brought him to the house of my mother, and into the chamber of her who

conceived me.” The King James says, “It was but a little but I passed from them...” If the watchmen are paying attention to their business in the preaching of the Word and in counsel to you, you should be able to find Christ not far beyond their words to you. Do you seek for Christ in the preaching of the Word? Then you shall find Him not far beyond the words of the preacher if he is faithful to preach Christ. The preacher cannot give you Christ or reveal Christ to you Himself. But he can point you to Him.

The purpose of good preaching is not to become enamored with the preacher and think of how great he is. The purpose of good preaching is that you might find Christ. Find Him for the first time, for yourself, or find Him for the thousandth time for yourself. When the Shulamite found Christ, it says, “she held Him and would not let Him go.” O hold on to Christ; those thoughts and feelings in relation to the preached word of God; where and when He makes Himself known to you; and do not let him go. Do not think it a casual thing that Christ reveals Himself to you. It is a very special thing; the sense of His presence and power and glory in your heart.

The Shulamite, it says, “would not let Him go until she had brought Him to the house of her mother, into the chamber of her who conceived her. The Christian who has come to know the realities of Christ in them, the hope of glory, wants more than anything for their relatives to come to know these realities of the forgiveness of sins, a righteousness not their own, and fellowship and communion with the Father and the Son. They will not be satisfied to depart this life until they know that their relatives know Christ. “Now I can depart in peace,” says Simeon, when he held Christ in his arms. And the Christian who has found Christ will not be satisfied until they can “bring Him into the house of their mother; that is the church; “into the chamber of her who conceived them.”

Spiritual conception and birth often take place in the house of God, where the Word is sown as seed in the hearts of sinners and they come to have a second birth; a new birth. They are born again by the seed of the word of God being planted in their hearts. A conception of life takes place. They now want to bring the testimony of how they came to saving faith to the elders of the church. They now want to give their testimony and be baptized. They now want to devote their life to the one who loved them and gave Himself for them. They have now found the One whom they love.