

**Song of Solomon 7: 6-8a; “The Stature of Christ’s Bride”, Sermon # 62 in the series – “I am My Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

In these particular verses the Heavenly Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, is speaking of how fair and how pleasant His Bride is, with all of her delights. He is speaking in the context of marital love. His delights in this passage are related to His spiritual fellowship with her. Specifically, we will find, as I will apply it to you, from these verses, that He is enamored with her stature, her breasts, and her breath, her mouth, and her lips. Sounds like the romantic love you find in marriage, doesn't it? Actually, this passage Christ is speaking of a spiritual romantic love. It is a deep and powerful and perfect love which Christ has for His whole Universal Church, and it is translated into the particular love that He has for each person who savingly believes in Him. I believe that it will be very beneficial to the cultivation of fellowship with Christ, if you will begin to think of Him in this holy and exciting way; as the One who because He gave Himself for you on the cross, He is now caught up, in this spiritual love relationship with you; so much so, that He is excited about seeing you grow up into Him, your risen living Head. He is looking for your exercising faith in Him, and is He taking notice of every loving act of obedience that proceeds from your faith in Him. So let us pray now, to see the love of Christ more clearly in this time of our examination of these spiritual realities, so that we will in every way be learning to please the One who has loved us; the One who is loving us, in such a magnificent way.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Let us think together of Christ’s commendation of the Bride’s stature.**  
(verses 6-8a)

“How fair and how pleasant you are, O love, with your delights!” “This stature of yours is like a palm tree, and your breasts like its clusters.” “I said, ‘I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches.’” The Lord calls the Church His love. And He does this because all believers together, and each individual believer separately considered, is all His delight. This is the exclusiveness of His perfect love. It is exclusive to each believer because He, as the God-Man is able to give His full attention to every believer as if they were the only believer on the planet; as though they were the only believer in all time. Certainly we can understand why we should be commanded to delight ourselves in the Lord, for He is All-Perfection. But when He looks at us, and delights in us, when we have so much remaining corruption within us, we find it very hard to believe that He should pay such particular attention to us.

But let us remember that what He delights in, is not the remaining corruption in us, but the New Creature that we are because of the power and beauty of what His own grace and Spirit are producing in us. This is what makes us beautiful to Him; this is what is pleasant to Him to think upon and to commend. He is continually bringing to His mind the fact that it is out of the abundance of His grace which He has lavished upon us, that we have been made beautiful. It is because of the working of His Spirit that we will be changed and continually transformed from one degree of glory to another. This spiritual beauty is brought to maturity by the Lord the Spirit. This is what He loves; This is what He delights Himself in. He delights in seeing what a beauty His Church is becoming by His continually imputing the perfections of His grace to her. She is clothed in His righteousness; the beautiful garment which He wove for her through His perfect obedience to God’s law, on her behalf. And further, it is His delight to think about the measure and the quality of what His imparted grace accomplishes; this great and powerful grace which He gives to each believer in love.

Dear Christian – Do you think about the fact that Christ does indeed delight Himself in you because He so clearly sees what He has made of you in His giving you the gift of regeneration

and saving grace? Do you see what He is making of you even now, by the working of His Spirit in your heart, and also what He will make of you in the future, in glorifying you by His precious and powerful working? He is making you fit for heaven and for eternal glory. He is making you fit to dwell with Him forever in indescribable bliss. But He wants you to understand that He enjoys the process of your becoming holy even as He is holy, just as much as the end of perfect righteousness which He will bring you to. This stirs His holy heart, and this is why each every aspect of your salvation is so delightful to Him. It is because He loves you and delights in you, dear believer. What does He delight in? He delights in the fact that His Bride is “fair” and “pleasant”.

How does Christ describe the particulars of this fairness” and this “pleasantness” of the one He loves? He looks upon His Bride the Church and every member in it as palm trees He says here. Now, we now should ask ourselves – What is a palm tree like? The palm tree is known for its straightness and erectness; it is an upright tree, not crooked or bent over. So, the whole purpose for the Church’s existence is to be seen as upright. Her form is upright and her person is upright. This refers the both her being, and her behavior; what she is in her heart as well as what she does in her behavior. Her being upright in her stature is directly related to what God purposes that she be and what she will become. I want you to turn with me over to Ephesians chapter 4, verses 7-16.

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” “Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’” “(Now this, “He ascended” – What does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?” “He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of equipping the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, , to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

You see here that the object of Christ’s ascending on high and leading captivity captive was that He might literally and really and spiritually, in every sense, become Head over all things to the church. When He ascended to heaven, He led captivity captive. He had triumphed over sin and Satan and death at the cross and now in ascending to heaven He would set the stage for the application of His redemption. He sent the Holy Spirit to His Bride the Church to dwell with His Church on the Day of Pentecost, and He has been working in His Church in all generations, so that she would be transformed into His likeness in a moral and spiritual way. To that end, He gave gifts to men to lay the foundations in truth in the days of the apostles, prophets, and evangelists in the time of the early Church, and now by means of pastor-teachers. What was begun in the days of the apostles because of the love Christ for His Church, will continue till the end of the age. There will be progression to the end of the world, and goal is the stature of Christ and perfection. Although there will not be perfection in the sense of absolute perfection in this Church age or in the life of any individual Christian in this life, yet we are growing up into Christ, in this holy completion of God’s purposes in relation our salvation.

What is the end of all this? It is that we might all come to the unity of the faith, both in doctrine in holy practice. And this comes about by speaking that doctrinal truth in love; that we as His Church might grow up into the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man. Paul is

speaking generically of men. In the spiritual sense He could have said that she (His Church) would grow up into a perfect Bride in regard to her spiritual stature. Indeed, in chapter 5, he says in verse 25 – “Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.” And in verse 32 he says: “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” This is how the Church is described; her stature is that she would grow up in her heart and her actions to the measure of a perfect person; to the stature of the fullness of Christ. How does this come about specifically for the Church as a whole, and each individual member of it?

**Well, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Let us think together about the Church’s breasts as being like clusters on this palm tree.**

Verse 7 says – “This stature of yours is like a palm tree, and your breasts like its clusters.” “I said, ‘I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches.’” “Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine...” This palm tree, when it grows up in its stature, will bear fruit for Christ. On nature’s palm tree in the Middle East, the clusters are dates which grow in huge clusters up near the top of the stem of the tree, and underneath the branches which spread out like a head on the tree. Robert Hawker the Commentator says – “It is said that the palm tree differs from other trees in this striking particularity; that it doth not live by its roots, but its head. Whether this be so, or not, I cannot determine: but certain it is, the church of Christ hath Christ for her head, as well as her root. In fruitfulness the church resembles the palm-tree, and in height, and verdure, for it is an ever-green. It is exceedingly prolific, and so is the church. And what so lofty, so exalted, as the church of Christ.” (end of quote)

Christ, the Husband of the Church is here pictured as resolved to go up to this palm tree, His Church, and take hold of her branches. The Lord Jesus in John chapter 15, verse 2 says – “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. The Church’s breasts here in our text in Song of Solomon are representative of her love for Christ which leads to her bearing good spiritual fruit unto Him, through this spiritual interaction that she has with Him. Bearing fruit unto Christ begins with repentance of all of our sins. In Luke 13: 7 it says – “Look, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this tree.” Even so, God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, look for repentance from sinful works, and initiative being taken on the part of the Christian, to bring forth the fruit of good works. Listen also to Hosea Chapter 14, verse 8 – “Ephraim shall say, ‘what have I to do anymore with idols?’” “I have heard and observed him.” “I am like a green cypress tree; your fruit is found in Me.” “Who is wise?” “Let him understand these things.” “Who is prudent?” “Let him know them.” “For the ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”

Christ is also looking for a loving, thoughtful obedience to all of His commandments. This comes from the powerful working of the Holy Spirit which leads to the Christian’s real consideration of Christ’s commandments; indeed all of God’s moral commandments which are found in the word. Psalm 119: 32 – “I will run in the way of Your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart. And, the Lord Jesus says in John 15: 14 – “If you love Me, keep My commandments”. In John 15: 8 He says: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” This is the basis of all real and lasting fruit-bearing that takes place in your Christian life. It is abiding in the love that Christ has for you, in order that you will be able to flourish spiritually in all of your heart relationship with Him, and all of the works that you do for Him.

Listen to Psalm 92, verses 12-15 – “The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.” “Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.” “They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” Notice that those who are fresh and flourishing, that they are strong to declare that the Lord is upright. Oh, they may indeed be called the upright ones because they are doing and keeping God’s commandments, but they realize that their uprightness of their heart and conduct of their life and Christian character are all established, only by seeing Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, as their rock, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him. Their object in all the progress that they make in living their Christian life to His glory, is so that they would be found in Him as it says in Philippians 3: 9; not having a righteousness of their own which is from the law, but that which through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that they may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means they might attain to the resurrection from the dead.” “Not that they have already attained, or are already perfected; but they press on, that they may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of them.”

The Lord laid hold of Paul at the time of His conversion that he would be an instrument (a chosen vessel) of His to bring the gospel to Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. At the time of the writing of the book of Philippians, he was in prison for the gospel’s sake, but he was not dismayed. He was showing forth his love to Christ even there, and spiritually speaking, Christ was climbing his tree to gather the clusters of his love to Him. Paul thought this way: “To live was Christ, and to die was gain.” And he would count all things to be dung that he might find Christ. Paul had great desires for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom, and his abundant labors in the word and the gospel, as an apostle of Christ’s body the Church, was very desirable to Christ. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15: 10 Paul says: “By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

Our text is telling us that when Christ sees this kind of loving zeal on behalf of His cause and kingdom, he would climb up into the palm tree, as it were, to see this love that Paul was exhibiting to Him. Christ will always take hold of the Church’s branches when they are ripe with loving obedience. He will search to find the breasts of His Church’s love and obedience to Him. He will find the clusters of your good works, and the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in your life. This will be pleasant to Him; it will always be His delight! The application? Let now your breasts, your love and affections for Christ, your service and obedience to Him, be like the clusters of the vine to Him, so that He will want to climb your tree and take hold of branches. Pray that your faith and your obedience and your running in the way of His commandments, and your use of your spiritual gifts, will all be done to His glory, because of your great love for Him.