

**Song of Solomon 8: 5b & 6; “Set Me as a Seal on Your Heart”, Sermon # 68 in the series – “I am My Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

When I last spoke to you from this book, back in June of 2020, I said to you that the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved, in two senses. The first sense is related to the fact that this world, in all generations, is a wilderness of sin which we live in. And our Lord says that Christians, those who are in the world, will at times have difficulty and tribulation. But He also says in John 16: 33 – “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”. In other words, since He has overcome the world, we as individual Christians, now have the power to be able to overcome it, as well. We will experience the practical victory of Christ helping us do so, as we live our lives to Him.

The other sense of our coming out of the wilderness as Christians is on the level of the Church coming out of the wilderness of Antichristian darkness and opposition. According to many promises in many places in the Scripture, the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom shall also come out of the wilderness and shall experience victory; that is, in relation to the gospel’s advance among the nations. When she comes out of this wilderness there will be great reason for rejoicing world-wide. And the prospect of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, coming to cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea, will become a reality. We ought to be looking forward to this, and laboring for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

But at this hour I want to talk to you about something which is more personal for every Christian; that is, your being awakened and converted, and your setting Christ your heavenly Bridegroom as a seal upon your heart and your arm. We want to think about these word pictures in personal terms. I want you to think of your own relationship with Christ, your heavenly Bridegroom. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – That you would remember your awakening. 2<sup>nd</sup> – That you would remember to set Christ as a seal on your heart. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – That you would remember to set Christ as a seal upon your arm. I pray that these truths will serve to stimulate real heart conversation between You and Your Savior, when you partake of the Lord’s Supper. I hope that this message will lead you to express your love to Christ in the way which this text describes.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – That you would remember your awakening.**

Verse 5 says – “Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” “I awakened you under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth; there she who bore you brought you forth.” The awakening here is the awakening of a sinner to their need to be saved from their sins. It is when the Holy Spirit moves in the sinner’s mind and heart to convict and convince of sin, so that that person is alarmed concerning the consequences of their disobedience to God’s word. They begin, after they are awakened to re-think their refusal to receive God’s remedy for sin which is only found in Jesus Christ. When a person is awakened, they are not necessarily converted right away. Sometimes a person can be awakened and never converted, depending on what they do about the convictions that they are feeling.

But, when the Holy Spirit shines the glorious light of Christ into their heart with the intent to save, that person will not only be convicted, they will most certainly come to Christ to find salvation. He causes them to be born again. Each true believer should be able to remember a general time period in their life where they were awakened and they were saved. Sometimes, it is true, a believer cannot remember the exact time that they were converted to Christ. But even if this is your case, you

still ought to be able to remember a time when you had dealings with God; a time when you were awakened by Him see the poverty of your condition, spiritually. A time when you received Him.

Do you remember, dear Christian a time when light was shined into your heart and you saw how sinful you were in a good many of your actions? This was your awakening. You were convicted of the guilt of many sins which you knew were deserving of punishment. Your conscience was awakened to accuse you, and to condemn you, that there were many things in which you had fallen short of the glory of God. Because of the Spirit's working in your heart you began to understand spiritual things. You were awakened to the truth of the word of God. With some of you this was gradual. It took you some weeks or months of reading the Bible and praying. You felt empty inside, not knowing for sure what you could do to be saved. But eventually the light dawned in your mind, and you awakened to your need of Christ and His righteousness. And you consciously believed in the gospel. You came to the realization that your own righteousness was not good enough to bring you to a knowledge of the Holy One. You had to have Christ. You were awakened to see His beauty and His glory.

Sometimes a person is awakened quickly in a spiritual sense. This is pictured wonderfully for us in Acts chapter 16, verses 25-34. "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed." "And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself." "But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, 'Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.'" "Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas." "And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'"

This was a sudden awakening and a dramatic conversion. He believed in Christ along with his whole household. But not everyone is awakened in this way. With some people their awakening is very gradual and may last for some time. John Bunyan's case was like this. In *Grace Abounding to the Chief of sinners*, he relates over and over again how he was awakened. And yet he was for some time unsure of his conversion. And, we can also say that there are some who call themselves Christians who may have allowed themselves to, as it were, sleep in relation to living their life to God. Whether they are backslidden or unconverted, sometimes they may not know what is the case. But the apostle Paul knew how to address this kind of lazy Christian faith and obedience.

Ephesians chapter 5, verses 8-16. "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." "Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord." "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." "For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret." "But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light." "Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.'"

So you see here, that unbelievers need to be wakened up to flee from the wrath of God. But even believers need sometimes to be awakened from their spiritual sleep. Even they need to arise from this dead and lethargic state that they are in, spiritually. Christ will give you light as a Christian if you really want to obey the injunction of verses 15-17 of chapter 5 of Ephesians. "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to one another in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks

always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

Let me ask you now whether you have ever been awakened from spiritual death and brought to life? Have you been wakened up from wrath to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation? And if you do consider yourself a Christian, look your present life over, and ask yourself whether you are walking in the light as Christ is in the light? It is possible for a Christian to fall into a deep spiritual lethargy or sleep, where you are somehow unaware of the fact you have fallen into spiritual lukewarmness. Have you left your first love, as Jesus says to some in the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2: 4? He goes on to say in verse 5 – “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or I will come to quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent.”

So there is a need for each of us to examine ourselves to see whether we are spiritually strong or spiritually weak. To be spiritually weak is to be a spiritually sleepy Christian. Do you love the brethren? Do you spend time with other believers in the church or are you a spiritual recluse? Listen to the words of Romans 13: 11-14 – “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.” “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” “Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.” “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

### **2<sup>nd</sup> - That you would remember to set Christ as a seal on your heart.**

Christ says – “I awakened you under the apple tree.” There your mother brought you forth; there she who bore you brought you forth.” And then Christ says to the believer – “Set me as a seal upon your heart....” The apple tree here is a word picture of Christ’s cross bearing fruit which could be picked and eaten by the Bride to benefit her eternally. It is a picture of the tree of life. In Revelation 22: 14 the Lord Jesus says – “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.” “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.”

So, when you were awakened by Christ, you were awakened to see the greatness and glory of Christ’s redemptive work at the cross. You see it as a tree bearing fruit for you to partake of spiritually. All of us as Christians are beneficiaries of His active obedience; of His having kept all of the commandments of God perfectly. This righteousness that He worked out during the course of His life, is imputed to you. We are also partakers of His passive obedience; that is, of His being willing to go to the cross to bear the punishment for our sins. All of these perfect actions of Christ’s in His obedience and His sacrifice are the spiritual nutrients which go into making up the grace which He supplies to you; to strengthen you and to nourish you spiritually.

When you are converted, you sit down in His shade with great delight. And His fruit is sweet to your taste. He brings you to the banqueting house, the church; and even today, to His Supper. His banner over you is love. (Song of Solomon 2: 4) He sustains you spiritually with cakes of raisins and refreshes you with apples when you are lovesick, it says in verse 5 of chapter 2. He sustains you by grace being given to you in bite-sized pieces every day. But we especially remember these things at this time, at the Lord’s Supper. What should be your response to all that He has done and all that He has given?

Well, here under the apple tree of Christ’s finished work is the place where we were all brought forth in the New Birth. We were brought forth by the Father drawing us and by the Spirit’s planting

the seed of righteousness in our heart. All of this is based upon the work of Christ. He is saying to us that our response, therefore, ought to be that we would value Him so highly that we would set Him as a seal upon our heart. Let us remember that we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit as a downpayment of our inheritance and the One who is to guide us into all the truth. He will comfort us in all of our afflictions, and He will be with us in all the times of affliction and persecution. He is saying that the thoughts of our hearts should be sent to Him day by day as a love letter, as long as we are separated from Him by physical distance. We do not see Him now, but we love Him.

To set Him as a seal on your heart means that in your mind, that you would set the truth of all that He has done for you in a special place where you really think deeply about it. All that He has done for you should be, as it were written down by you in your mind and heart like a letter; that you might pour over it, and ponder it, and then send your thoughts of love off to Him, sealing this letter even as a lover would seal a letter, so that no one else would see it. No one else would know its contents. You want these deepest thoughts of yours to be for Him alone.

He will receive this love letter of your thoughts, sealed, and He will know, as He opens it, of your love for Him, and your intention to keep His commandments. He has said – “If you love Me keep My commandments.” “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.” “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” Christ has asked us to remember Him. This is how we do so. When we think in this way, and pray in this way, we are setting a seal upon our heart, saying – Here is my heart, here is my life, here are my highest affections, here is my wholehearted commitment to do Your will and my full purpose is to learn to walk in Your ways. This is what it means for us to set Him as a seal upon our heart.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> – That you would remember to set Christ as a seal upon your arm.**

What does this phrase mean? I think that since the arm is the word picture of the member of our body by which we do everything that we do, that setting a seal upon it means that we will consciously remember that all that we go about to do for Him must be done from the standpoint of our love for Him, and our loyalty to Him. It is because we love Him that we will keep His commandments. It is because we love Him that our highest loyalty will be to Him. And the seal that we set upon our arm is the reminder of this, day by day. Setting Christ as seal on your arm means that you are not afraid to declare to others that You belong to Him.

You remember that Peter denied that he was Christ’s disciple three times when Jesus was being taken away to be falsely tried, and scourged, and crucified. He wept bitterly about this afterwards, when he realized that He had failed His Lord so badly. But you will remember that when he was going to be restored by the Lord Jesus, and re-commissioned to the work that He had called Peter to do as an apostle, that our Lord Jesus asked him 3 times, once for each of His denials – Peter, do you love Me?

In John 21: 17-19 it says this – “Jesus said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’” “Peter was grieved because He said to him the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, ‘Do you love Me?’” “And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’” “Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’” “Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” “This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God.” “And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’”

All that Jesus needs to know, for each of us to fulfill the personal ministry that He has called us to, is whether we really love Him. If we truly love Him, we will wear the spiritual armband of our confession of Him so that everyone can see it. But even if we may sometimes fail Him, the real issue

to our becoming faithful disciples will always be – Do we love Him? If we truly love Him, we will declare Him before men. This eventually, Peter would do, and he would seal it with giving his life to show it forth. Let us pray that we will have the grace to do the same. Let us seal Him on our hearts, first of all, and then set Him as a seal on our arm as well.