

Song of Solomon 1: 2 and 3; “Therefore do the Virgins love You”, Sermon # 2 in the series – “I am my Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 29th, 2009, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

In our first sermon, I introduced you to the two main characters of this divinely inspired allegory. They are the Bride and the Bridegroom. I labored to show you that this is a story told by King Solomon concerning the greatest of all marriages; the marriage of Christ to His Church. Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom so loved the Church that He laid down His life for her. He took it up again in His resurrection from the dead that He might give to her all the riches of His grace; that He might bring her into spiritual marriage with Himself as the closest of companions, and show her His love by leading her through this life unto eternal life and eternal glory. It is the Song of Songs for the King of Kings; it is the story of the ages, and will be spoken of forever. That is why I desire to preach through this book. It is so that you might understand, if you are a Christian, that you are betrothed to Christ and that you will want to cultivate this love relationship with Him even more than you have by hearing these sermons. And if you are not a Christian I would make you jealous with a holy jealousy, so that you, looking on, and hearing about what it means to know and to love and to be married to Christ; that you will desire this for yourself. There is another group of persons who are related to the Bride, who are introduced to us here in verse 3. They are called “the virgins” by the Bride. And they are said to love the Bridegroom too. Indeed the Bride considers herself one of the virgins because she says in verse 4, “We will be glad and rejoice in you.” “We will remember your love more than wine.” And so it will be appropriate this afternoon to ask the following questions. “Who are these virgins?” And why do they love the Bridegroom? Let us answer the first question by making it the introduction to the other.

1st of all- Who are these Virgins?

If the Bride is the only one married to Christ in this story, then in what sense do these virgins love Him? The way that I believe that this can be answered is to think about the Church of Jesus Christ as composed not of one believer, but of many believers. And it is the entire group of all believers in all ages which make up the Bride of Christ. There is one Bride and one Bridegroom. But the spiritual Bride of Christ is made up of many multiplied millions, perhaps billions of members. And yet each of these individual believers has the spiritual desire to save themselves, while they walk here upon the earth, for their future husband; their Lord Jesus Christ. Virginity; remaining sexually pure before marriage, is not generally prized in the way that it should be in our time. In the mind of God it is the essence of godliness and thoughtfulness, as well as love, to be able to wait to give yourself to your future spouse at the right time. And even though engagement in Paul’s day meant that you were legally married; it was never used as a license for immorality. Virginity was highly prized and it was spoken of by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 2, in this way – “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.” “For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” The Apostle is saying that he was jealous over the believers there in Corinth, that even as he had preached the gospel to them; the gospel of the love of Christ for sinners to them; and that even as they had received the overtures of the truth of what Christ had done for them as sinners; and even as he had told them of Christ’s love for them in His obedience and sufferings for them; and they believed it and responded to his words in the exercise of saving faith; they were now espoused, or betrothed spiritually, to Christ. And the reason for his jealousy was that he knew that even though that was true; that he was still concerned that they might be led astray by Satan, that serpent of old; that their minds might be “corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is in Christ, and that they might somehow receive another gospel which was false. Thus their

reputation as pure virgins would be stained and then they could in no sense be considered as spiritually betrothed to Christ.

This was the same predicament that Joseph, the supposed father of Jesus, found himself in when he was betrothed to Mary. She was found to be with child. And he did not know that she was with child, being still a virgin. He thought to “put her away privately.” But he was instructed by an angel of the Lord, appearing to him in a dream that he should not be afraid to take her as his wife. The sense in which the word “virgin” is used in the Scriptures is in reference to a person who is morally pure before they are married. They may be betrothed, as Mary was, and yet the husband-to-be has not taken her to be his wife physically and sexually. They are legally considered married already, even though the marriage has not been consummated, and if there would be sexual unfaithfulness during that time then the unfaithful one would be “put away” or divorced. The concept can be transferred over to the spiritual relationship of marriage with Christ in this way. A spiritual virgin is one who is spiritually pure in terms of moral and spiritual faithfulness to Jesus Christ. When you believe in Jesus Christ you are espoused to Him as a pure virgin. You take Him as your Lord and spiritual husband. But if you are unfaithful to Him spiritually in apostatizing from the truth of the gospel through believing in another gospel, or by not repenting of your sins and rather continuing to practice them; then you are not really married to Christ at all. And if you continue to think so, and do not repent, then on the Day of Judgment, the Day when the marriage of the Bride and the Bridegroom will be consummated, you will not enter in to eternal, holy, spiritual wedlock with Him. The Lord will disown ever having known you in terms of your supposed marriage to Him. But the real question was; were you ever really spiritually united to Him in the first place? The answer in this case is no. It is because you took Christ, but you were not faithful your promise and your vows to hold fast to Him and to His word. But Christ is always faithful to Himself and to His word for everyone who comes in sincerity to Him.

And this must be remembered. Salvation is really at His initiative and it is based upon His finished work at the cross. It ultimately all depends on His faithfulness to His promise. When Christ really does come to your soul and unites Himself to you, you are His forever. He will not cast you off, or throw you out, or divorce you. It is not possible to lose your salvation if God has begun a good work in you. God will perfect that work in preparing you to meet Christ face to face on that great Day, the Day when you will see your beloved and the marriage will be consummated. Christ will not divorce you once you are married to Him and become a part of His Bride. So you see; what we all need to understand is this. A person may take Christ and yet Christ not take them. You say, “How could that be?” Well; they may have tried to take Him to be their husband on their terms, and not on gospel terms. Or they did not do it in conjunction with the truth of God’s word. Christ will not, and cannot, have a treacherous or a false Bride. He cannot marry you spiritually on false pretenses. He will have a Bride that after she has gone through this period of betrothal, shall be without spot or wrinkle. That is what a good portion of this book and the book of Revelation is about. He will have a spiritually beautiful and glorious Bride. And if a person is treacherous, or if they are hold to what is false, they will be very disappointed when they find that the marriage they thought was real was annulled because they really loved their sin or a lie, and not Christ. What we need to understand is that a person may, and should, and can, if God is drawing them, come and take Christ by faith in the gospel. It then becomes very evident over time that Christ was most surely undertaking on their behalf to save them from all of their sins. The question that each of us must ask ourselves is, “Have I been betrothed to one husband, even Christ, on His terms?” Am I a chaste virgin? A chaste virgin is one who has truly come to know Christ on Biblical terms. He or she knows that this is their license to be wed, and they accept the terms. The terms are; you give your whole heart sincerely to Him to be saved from your sins. And this leads me back to our text and to our second question; why do these virgins love the Bridegroom? And I believe that we can see that there

are 3 reasons which the Bride gives as to why the virgins love the Bridegroom. They love Him because His love is better than wine. And secondly they love Him because of the fragrance of His good ointments. And thirdly, they love Him because His name is ointment poured forth. We will only have time to look at why Christ's love is better than wine. We will save the other two for our next sermon.

1st of all – Let's look at a few of the reasons that Christ's love is better than wine.

Wine is the drink which as it says in Psalm 104, verse 15, "makes glad the heart of man." It is one of the greatest Scripture word pictures of man's trying to find his pleasures in earthly things. When you come to Christ, to be married to Him, you take Him to be your husband because you have begun to see that His love is better than wine; than all other earthly things. In Judges Chapter 9, verse 13, Jotham in speaking a parable said to the men of Shechem said, "But the vine said to them, 'Should I cease my new wine, which cheers both God and men, and go to sway over trees?'" The parable goes on to state that they chose a false god to worship, Baal-Berith, and they chose a bramble bush of a man for a leader instead of this good vine which produced the good wine. In other words, should the men of Shechem have abandoned the good and gracious rule of Gideon's 70 sons in order to have the son of Gideon's female servant, Abimelech, come and rule over them? No, they should not have done it, but they did. They could have had the good wine and the new wine of God's gracious gift in wise rulership, but they chose a fool instead. And so some persons will prefer to have a fool rule over them and lead them into the pleasures of earthly things and worldly wisdom. That is their religion. It is what rules them. They would rather have the things that lead them to death and to God's judgment rather than believe in God's love in Christ, which is infinitely better. They would rather have earthly pleasures than all the exalted spiritual pleasures that the virgins here declare are better than wine. What about you? Wine is that good earthly drink; which if not abused, will make man's heart glad in an earthly sense. As you all know; there are many different kinds of wines and men like to taste of them and rejoice over them. They are valued highly and even treasured up in special cellars to be brought out at the right time, and served in the right way, and drunk down upon special occasions. But those who know Christ place a greater value upon His love than upon any earthly delight; even the most exalted and highly esteemed of earthly delights. They compare the two and they would rather have the better wine of Christ's love. If a person wants earthly wine more, it is because of the deceitfulness of sin.

Turn with me over to Psalm 4 and you will see wine compared with Christ's love and His love winning out in the heart and mind of a saint. Verse 6 says, "There are many who say, 'Who will show us any good?'" "Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us." "You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased." "I will both lie down in peace and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." This is the greatness of the love of God in Jesus Christ. His love is so great that it puts gladness in our hearts by His Spirit. God's love is poured out within our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Let me ask you if you have this kind of gladness in your heart. You may be losing big in the stock market in these days, but do you have gladness in your heart knowing that the love of Christ means more to you than all riches? This love is better than wine because it is a new wine altogether; it is a spiritual wine. Jesus speaks of this for New Covenant believers in Luke 5: 33-39 if you will turn with me there. "Then they said to Him, (the Scribes and Pharisees said to Him) 'Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?'" "And He said to them, 'Can you make the friends of the Bridegroom fast while the Bridegroom is with them?'" "But the days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days." "Then He spoke a parable to them: 'No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was out the new does not match the old.'" "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins ruined." "But new wine

must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” “And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, the old is better.” (Or good enough)

Now what is Jesus saying here? He is saying that His love, and our relationship to Him by faith, puts an entirely new motivation into our keeping the commandments of God. We don't have to fast and pray as long as we know that His presence is with us. The Bridegroom is with us. It doesn't mean that we will never fast and pray. When we do not sense His presence, or when we sense His displeasure; when we have not kept His commandments and do not know the reality of His power at our side; then we should fast. That is what Jesus is saying here. Jesus disciples of that day, at that time, did not need to fast and pray often when the Bridegroom was right there with them. They had the new wine and the better. The Scribes and the Pharisees liked the old wine of religious formalism and ceremonies better. They didn't understand the love relationship which leads to spiritual marriage to Christ.

The wonderful thing about the new wine of love of Christ is that it is it never runs out. You remember the incident recorded for us in John 2 where Jesus went to a wedding and they ran out of wine. And Jesus' mother came to Him and said to Him, “They have no wine.” You remember Jesus' reproof to her don't you? “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?” “My hour has not yet come.” “His mother said to the servants, ‘Whatever He says to you, do it.’” Why did He give her this reproof? It was because He wanted to let her know that He did not do miracles simply to meet the earthly needs of the moment. He did His miracles so that people might be point on to a relationship with Himself and that they might come to know His saving love; that they might be saved from their sins, and know the eternal pleasures that He gives spiritually. But even in saying that to her; He said it to her in love, knowing that people would be saved and pointed on to this greater relationship of marriage with Him. No one remembers who it was that got married that day; it is not recorded for us. But the miracle is written down that you might taste of the new wine of Christ's free gift of loving grace in the gospel and be saved. “Fill the waterpots with water.” “And they filled them to the brim.” “And He said to them, ‘Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.’” “And they took it.” “When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servant who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom.” “And he said to him, ‘Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior.’” “You have kept the good wine until now!” “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.” You see, the people that day were pointed to a greater glory and excellence than simply the earthly marriage of this couple, and a greater love which was at work than simply earthly love. It was the love of Christ. It was the love of Christ that was better than wine. He can change the water into wine. And He can change your heart so that wine is not the major focus of it any longer. But His love is. There was an earthly bride and a bridegroom there that day and Christ honored the estate of marriage by His presence there that day. But there was also a heavenly Bride and Bridegroom there that day, and neither earthly wine, nor the heavenly wine was lacking.