

Song of Solomon 4: 12-16; “A Garden Enclosed”, Sermon # 39 in the series – “I am My Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 5th, 2012, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is His sister, His spouse. The Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself flesh and blood in His Incarnation and became our brother. And in Hebrews Chapter 2, verse 10, it says that “it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” “For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Jesus is our brother who suffered to bring us into relationship with God through His sufferings on the cross. He is even more. He is also the spouse of His Church; His believing people.

Christ suffered for you, dear believer, so that He could become your spiritual Bridegroom, and you are presently espoused to Him; awaiting the time of His literal physical appearing. But in the interim time, He now comes, and as soon as you ever believe in Him, He comes to live in your heart and work in your heart, and convince you of His love and care for you. This is heart religion, and you should always highly prize it. You should often be pursuing it with Him; for He is cultivating the good things of grace in your soul.

The souls of His believing people are pictured for us here, in these verses in Song of Solomon, as “a garden enclosed”. This is the truth that I want to open up for you this afternoon. 1st – We want to see that this is a personal and a secret garden. 2nd – We want to understand that this garden has plants, and trees and a fountain in it. And then 3rd, we want to understand that Christ is the partaker of the fruits of this garden.

1st of all – That this garden spoken of here is a personal and secret garden. (verse 12)

“A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse. The kind of garden that is being spoken of here is a personal, sometimes secret, and always protected garden. It is the kind of garden which King Solomon probably had; a garden just for His own private cultivation and use. Listen to what he says in Ecclesiastes 2, verse 4 – “I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.” “I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.” (There is the personal element)

I would guess that most of these gardens were pretty public and they could be seen by many of His subjects. But I would also venture to guess that there were other gardens with fountains and springs in them, which were only for His own private use. Listen to Spurgeon. “It is a garden, but it is a garden enclosed-altogether shut out from the surrounding heaths and commons, enclosed with briars and hedged with thorns, which are impassable by the wild beasts. There is a gate through which the great husbandman himself can come; but there is also a gate which shuts out all those who would only rob the keeper of the vineyard of his

rightful fruit. There is separation in the spring also. It is not the common spring, of which every passer-by may drink. No, it is one so kept and preserved distinct from men, that no lip may touch, no eye may even see its secret.”

“It is a something which the stranger intermeddles not with; it is a life which the world cannot give and cannot take away. All through, you see, there is a separateness, a distinctness. If it be ranged with springs, still it is a spring specially shut up; if it be put with fountains, still it is a fountain bearing a particular mark - a king’s royal seal, so that all can perceive that this is not a general fountain, but a fountain that has a proprietor, and stands specially by itself alone. So is it with the spiritual life.”

The garden which is being spoken of, here in our verses, is the personal garden of Christ. It is His secret garden; the garden of the hearts of all of His people individually, and all of them together as His Church; His Elect people. The world may know that this garden exists, but they do not know why Christ keeps it to Himself, or what He intends to bring forth. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the One who has planted His Church in the good soil of His grace. And each of us should know that He works in this garden, and He tills the hearts of men in this, His garden, all for Himself, and for the Father’s glory. He is the One who planted this holy garden, and He is the One who keeps it and tills it for His own good pleasure.

Look over at Isaiah Chapter 51, verse 1. “Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug.” “Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him.” “For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.” Here the Lord would comfort and encourage the faithful, and admonish the backslidden people of Israel.

Those who would follow after righteousness and seek the Lord, he tells them that they should remember Abraham; the man of faith. They should remember the faith of Abraham and Sarah when they left Ur of the Chaldees and came to the Promised Land. God called him alone of all the peoples on the earth, and after many years of being barren, He gave Sarah “grace to conceive seed”. This is what the Lord does in salvation and in restoring backsliders from their terrible God-forgetting sins. He takes them out of the wilderness of their experience in sin and unbelief, and He makes it a garden of His planting.

All of this is based upon His work in making this garden; both corporately for His Church universal, and individually, in the heart of every believer. It is Christ our Savior’s work which must begin the Church’s life and continue its growth. Is it any accident that His sufferings for His Bride began in the Garden of Gethsemane? Is it any accident that after He was crucified and died that “in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and that in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid?” No, Jesus had to plant this garden alone. And it is His

work alone which can break up the fallow ground of your heart so that you will seek to co-operate with work of planting and sowing in your soul. In Jeremiah Chapter 4, verse 1, God says, "If you will return, O Israel, says, the Lord, 'Return to Me; and If you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved.'" "And you shall swear, the Lord lives,' in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him they shall glory." "For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: 'Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns.'"

This is how He saves sinners, and this is how He recovers backsliders. He does it by His Word which is the seed which He plants in the heart of a person by the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. He accomplished the planting of the Church, and all believers in it, by His sowing of the seed of His life, and then having the truth of His gospel proclaimed in all the world. Those who believe in the gospel become the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified. (Isaiah 61, verse 3)

You can see what He does when He begins the garden in the life of an individual believer if you will turn over to Romans Chapter 6, verse 1. "What shall we say then?" "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" "Certainly not!" "How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." "For if we have been united together (the King James Version says, "If we have been planted together") in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

You can see here that you, if you are a believer, are planted together in both the likeness of Christ's death, and in the likeness of His resurrection. These are real actions of God and Christ in your soul, and they lead to your really experiencing a death to sin in your soul, and being raised to newness of life; a life of obedience in your heart and life. All true obedience to Christ is cultivated here in the heart of the believer. You must ask yourself whether you have experienced His gracious work in your heart, and whether it is an on-going work which is leading you to a greater faith in Him and obedience to His commands?

This work of the Lord in planting and tilling His garden also involves His leading people to repentance over every known sin. Since you have died to sin, how can you still go on living in it? The Lord will not let you do it. And He will so work in your heart and your life that you will not want to continue in sin, and you will take steps to repent of it. And this repentance will not be simply a one-time act at conversion, but it will be an everyday activity in the heart and life of every believer. How often people like to blame others for things that are wrong in their life; even those who are apparently believers do this. Look over at Isaiah 58, verse 9b. "If you take away the

yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall be dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday.” “The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, who waters do not fail.”

You can see that from these verses that true repentance will lead you to good works; the good works of feeding the hungry and satisfying the afflicted soul. Let me ask you to apply this to yourself by asking yourself whether you have done this? Have you ceased to blame others for your troubles and sins, and have you instead by grace come to the point where you seriously consider and do something good to help those whom you formerly criticized? You are Christ’s garden, where the secret work of His grace takes place. He has you all to Himself, but the fruits of His good work, as we are seeing, shall bless and benefit other people as well as glorify God.

Now 2nd – We want to understand that this garden has plants, and trees and a fountain in it. (verses 12b-15)

“A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” “Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices—a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.” All of these trees and plants which produce spices and fruits, and all of the “living waters” which are mentioned are those good things of spiritual grace and life, righteousness and truth which Christ Himself first plants there, and then they produce good character qualities in the life of the believer.

They lead also to righteous and holy and loving actions on the part of the believer in relation to promoting Christ’s kingdom and His glory. They lead to the believer truly learning to serve Christ and to truly help other people around them. This is very precious to Christ. Let us take an overview of their meaning. All of these herbs and spices are meant to do good to the bodies of men. Even so they represent graces of the spirit which are hoped to be seen by Christ in the soul of each and every believer. If you will notice, the herbs and spices which are mentioned, many of them remind of us what we have read about Christ in the New Testament.

Calamus was an ingredient in the holy anointing oil. It is a scented cane and is said to have been found in a valley of Lebanon, reed-like, much jointed, and very fragrant when bruised. Christ was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and He went about doing good; His life of obedience in all of its aspects was a sweet savor unto God, and He was bruised for our iniquities. Henna or Camphire – “The flowers are white and grow in clusters, and are very fragrant. The whole shrub is from four to six feet high”. This speaks of the purity of Christ’s life; which life He expects us to help Him to cultivate and develop in our own lives. Cinnamon is made into incense and is a sweet fragrance when burned.

So Christ’s prayers were like incense; offered up to God, and they were all heard and answered by the Father in regard to our salvation. He ever lives to make

intercession for us. Spikenard is mentioned in relation to Jesus' being anointed for His burial by Mary. Frankincense and myrrh are mentioned as gifts brought to Jesus by the wise men. A hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes were brought by Nicodemus to help Joseph of Arimathea in the binding of Jesus' body with strips of linen. In relation to what we are studying this afternoon, we find that the believer in Christ has received grace from their heavenly Bridegroom in order to serve God and other men.

In each and every case in which these herbs and spices are mentioned in the New Testament, it was mentioned in relation to service to Jesus, and people bringing their gifts to Jesus. Similarly in Psalm 45 in the Old Testament, we find the same kind of picture being portrayed in prophetic language of Christ Himself. Verse 8 – “All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made you glad.” You see, the lesson that you and I who believe in the Lord Jesus ought to draw from this, is evident. We have been given great grace from Christ to be saved. We who believe are clothed in garments of righteousness and holiness. We are now clothed in His garments and smell of His graces.

When we love Him and serve Him in accordance with His Word; when we do what is right and love and help other people to understand the greatness of our Shepherd-King, we are granted to be arrayed in the white linen which is mentioned also over in Revelation 19: 7 and 8. “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” “And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

So being clothed in Christ's righteousness and being scented with all the fragrance of Christ's righteousness and His good deeds, and our sins all being buried with Him in His sufferings; we rise to newness of life. We go about to serve Him and others and our heavenly Bridegroom is pleased. The Church is described for us here as being “a spring shut up, a fountain sealed”. In verse 15 she is described as “a fountain of gardens, a well of waters, and streams from Lebanon.” These are very significant metaphors of spiritual life and activity which proceed from the Holy Spirit's activity in the life of a believer; and His activity in and through individual churches; indeed through all of Christ's churches taken together as a whole.

Proverbs Chapter 11, verse 25 says, “The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.” The Lord Jesus Christ has watered us and made us a well-watered garden as His Church. The mission that He sends His followers on, is that they would water others; that they would take all of the good grace that He imparts, and direct it not only to their own refreshment, but to give it out to others. This involves our drinking deeply from Christ Himself first; but once He has given grace to us, He expects to be able to be refreshed by Himself being able to drink of what His grace has produced in us and led us to do for Him. He expects us to “give Him a drink” from our “fountain of waters”.

You can see this if you will turn over to John Chapter 4, verse 4. “Jesus needed to go through Samaria.” So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar,

near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."

"Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." "The woman said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?' "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.'

You can see here that Jesus expected this woman to do something for Him which she was not prepared to do until He had given her this gift of eternal and everlasting life. It is spoken of as "living waters" and "a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." In order that Jesus might be able to "drink" from her life and to taste of the fruits of righteousness, He had to save her from her sins. When He did this she went into the city and told others about Him and what He had done for her. They also came to faith when they came and heard Him for themselves. Let us realize the greatness of Christ's grace, and the greatness of the graces which lead us to serve our Christ, and to satisfy His thirst for good things in our hearts and in the life of our church.