

Song of Solomon 2: 2; "As a Lily among Thorns", Sermon # 20 in the series - "I am My Beloved's", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 29th, 2009, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

In the previous sermon we looked and saw how Christ is the Rose of Sharon. He is the Rose of Sharon because of the beauty and glory of His Person. Of all the flowers of the field, He is the most lovely by far. He is beyond compare. The Heavenly Father gave His Son, not only to be the bread and water of our eternal life; the every day sustenance of our spiritual life; but He also gave Him to us so that we might delight ourselves in Him forever as the greatest source of joy and object of beauty. The glory of our Lord Jesus Christ is meant to fill all of our spiritual senses. He has been given to us by the Father to overcome us, and to overwhelm us, with His beauty and glory in every holy way that we can think of Him. A sight of Him, spiritually speaking, brings us salvation. The fragrance of His person, and the reality of what He did, in living and dying to obtain the eternal salvation of all of God's Elect people, is meant to be received and to be thought upon in relation to all that we do and say. We are meant, as the Scriptures say, to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. This is one of the main things that Christ's Bride, His Church, is called to do. We are called to behold His beauty and glory and to let that be the means of transforming our lives. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3: 18) So having tasted and seen that the Lord is good; having smelled the fragrance of His finished work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, you and I have much to live out, and much to speak about. But in our flesh we would rather not exert ourselves. We would rather just keep smelling the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon. We would rather go directly to heaven and be with Him, and we do not want to think of having any contact with the thorns. Why does the Lord Jesus Christ wait to bring us to Himself; why does He keep us here upon the earth? Is not one of the main reasons, that we might communicate some of His beauty and His fragrance to others? This is the spiritual work of our hands. I like what Moses prays in Psalm 90, verse 16. "Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children." "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands." You see; this is our work, to know the reality of the beauty and glory of Christ for ourselves, and then to tell others about Him.

The last time that I preached to you from this passage we also spent some time together thinking about how Christ is the Lily of the Valley. He was the Lily of the valley in that He who dwelt on high in heaven, came down to dwell among the lowly. He came down to experience the valleys of this life on behalf of fallen sinners. He who was the King of Glory left the halls of heaven and came down to this sin-cursed earth, to dwell among men; to be the one bright flower among the thorns; the one bright spot in a world of darkness. He came to fulfill all righteousness. He humbled

Himself to the point of death, even death on a cross. And we know that His was a finished and a completed work. He no longer dwells among men. There is no further sacrifice necessary for sin. He was raised from the dead, and He is now at the right hand of the Father on high. And He is there at the Father's right hand until all of His enemies are made a footstool for His feet. He is the Chief Lily presently in heaven; there with all those believers who have gone before us. He is the beauty and the strength and the glory of our salvation. All those who believe in Him for eternal life are His lilies forever. We are the flowers which came from His root and branch. We are grafted into Him and are planted here upon the earth for a time in order that we might show forth the beauty and glory of our Savior; in order that others may smell the fragrance of Christ and be saved. And when we die, we are gathered to Him to be with Him forever. The old Battle Hymn of the Republic says, "In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea, with a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me: As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free, while God is marching on." We can think of ourselves with this holy mission; to be Christ's lilies; to be like Him; to represent His beauty and the glory of His grace to a world which is dying in their sins. As those who represent the Lord Jesus, it is our hope and prayer that other sinners around us might be changed to be His lilies as well. Christ is worthy of the best of our efforts. So this afternoon we want to 1st look at the truth that believers are lilies which represent Christ, and then secondly, we want to look at the truth that they are set among thorns and what that means. And then we will conclude with a few applications.

1st - All believers in heaven and earth are seen by Christ as His lilies, and they represent Him.

It is when a person is born again by the Spirit of God; that they become one of Christ's lilies. Even as Christ is the Chief Lily in His humility and purity and power of holiness, those who believe in Him are His flowers who represent these things now, on His behalf, to a watching world. Christ's lilies are far from being perfect in their souls when they begin this Christian life; but they are beautiful like Jesus Christ the Chief Lily in some very important ways. Through the New Birth they have become heavenly minded and they now want to do some earthly good for their Master. Even though they are not perfect, they know that they are commanded to be like Him, and this they desire to do, if they understand the path that they are on. They are on the path of righteousness. They are commanded to walk as Jesus walked. They are commanded to be holy even as Christ is holy, and they are commanded to be perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect. They are commanded in 2 Corinthians 7, verse 1, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." They are not legalists, but this is what they will strive for; they will strive for perfection in keeping God's Word in order that Christ-likeness may be formed in them. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is a beautiful thing. It was found in our Lord Jesus in the most abundant measure. A Christian will be a Lily in the demonstration of the fear of the Lord in His or her life. They will

be afraid of offending and dishonoring the Lord whom they love. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments." The fear of the Lord is like a lily; it is based upon the Christian's looking at the works of the Lord. Have regard for the works of the Lord.

The verse that I quoted to you just a moment ago was taken from Psalm 111, verse 10. But before that statement is made, there are found in this Psalm eight verses on the works of the Lord. Verse 2 says, "The works of the Lord are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them." "His work is honorable and glorious, and His righteousness endures forever." "He has made His wonderful works to be remembered; The Lord is gracious and full of compassion." "He has given food to those who fear Him." "He will ever be mindful of His covenant." "He has declared to His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations." What we should remember is that we who believe in the Lord Jesus are each one of His works. We will look like a Lily in our humility; it is true. But we will also, because of that humility in the sight of God and men, come to have a strength of character through increasing obedience; a beauty that is more and more like Christ's. This is how the Christian, like a lily, will represent Christ; they will live out their lives in the humble way of obedience, even as He did. They are meek without being weak. They are made beautiful with the graces of the Holy Spirit who is given to them. They are clothed with these graces, and even Solomon in all of his glory does not surpass them in the beauty of their soul when they are walking in the Spirit. All of this comes from having the grace of the fear of the Lord. In Isaiah 11: 3, it says that Christ's delight would be in the fear of the Lord." Let me ask you now; is this your delight? Is your delight in the fear of the Lord? Do you take pleasure in studying the works of the Lord? Study the Lily and see how pure and perfect it looks. It looks that way because it is one of the works of the Lord. It is just a frail flower, but it has great strength of beauty. It reflects the character of the perfection of holiness which is the goal which we are being led to; Christ being formed in the heart and life of each one who is trusting in Him. It is because Christ is being formed in the life of the Christian that he becomes gracious and compassionate like His Lord. It is because Christ is being formed in the life of the Christian that he or she comes to have a good understanding, through the fear of the Lord, in doing and keeping God's commandments. Look at the beauty and perfection of the Lily as God has created it and you will see what God would have you to become. You are already one of His lilies through the New Birth, and regeneration a very beautiful work in itself. It is the creation of the plant of grace in your heart. But God would have you go on and grow up in Christ, to show forth the beauty and glory of Christ's grace in your life in rendering to Him a sincere obedience to all of His commands. If you love the Lord, you will love all of His commandments. You will be concerned with your own heart, and whether you are perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, or whether you are tolerating some cherished sin there. You will be concerned with pressing on to know the Lord. You will be striving to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. You will be reading the best of books; the Bible and living by its promises and

precepts. You will be reading other good books and be pursuing wholesome activities your their life, rather than pursuing the vain things of the world. This is what it means to be one of the lilies of the Lord. Are planted in Christ; and are you growing up to look more and more like Him? This is what you must ask yourself today.

Secondly - We want to look at the truth that these Lilies are set among thorns and what that means.

"Like a lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters." Christ here calls His Bride a lily among the thorns; but notice that he calls her "His love". Will you not remember, O Christian, that Christ loves you very much. Not only did He, in love, lay down His precious life for you, but He loves you now in all your struggles and difficulties in relation to sinful people in this world; people who do not love you, and who will hurt you and take advantage of you if they can. Christ's love is real, and He is raised from the dead, and He ever lives to make intercession for you. This means that when Satan would oppose you and accuse you before the throne of God because of all the inconsistencies and sins that he sees in your life; that Christ is right there as your Advocate and will to speak to the Father on your behalf and declare the things which He has done for you and which He is presently doing for you, and even the things that He is going to do for you. I hope that you understand that without Christ's intercession you could never stand against the thorns in this life that you will most certainly face as you are trying to live your life to the glory of God. I want to turn you to several verses now, to show you the truth that people who are unbelievers and being led along by Satan are those who are being spoken of as thorns in the passage that we are studying. Turn with me to 2nd Samuel, Chapter 23, and verse 2. Here we have the last words of King David. And His words are of great significance to our understanding how the godly should expect opposition from those who rebel against God and His Word. "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue." "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.'" "And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth (could we also say, like a lily?), by clear shining after rain." "Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure." (The work of Christ on the cross, and His resurrection giving power to a sure holiness in His people) "For this is all my salvation and all my desire; will He not make it increase?" "But the sons of rebellion shall be as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands." "But the man who touches them must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place." What this is saying here is that those who rebel against the righteous rule of God and Christ over their lives are like thorns. They are those who will oppose God's people in every way that they can, in keeping God's Word and in their living righteously. What generation of Christians has not faced this. Thorns will hurt you if you try to touch them. Rebellious sinners will hurt you if you put your finger on their favorite sins and try to show them that they

are wrong to pursue them. The only way that they will not hurt you is if there are righteous laws and good police force, or army to protect you. You have to be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear. You have to have Constitutional political rights and enforcement of those political rights in your favor as a Christian. The importance of this is very great and it is being largely forgotten in our generation. Before the Constitutional government of the United States of America, religious freedom was really a very tenuous thing. Many Christians were persecuted and killed for trying to live according to their conscience in relation to the Bible. It was only the Lord's immediate care and protection over them; ruling as a king to defend them, that has ever kept the Lord's people safe from the harm of persecutors. The stories are too many to list. As a lily among the thorns so is my love among the daughters. The daughters were the nations surrounding Israel and Jerusalem that opposed her rebuilding the temple after her 70 years captivity in the Old Testament. The book of Nehemiah talks about the thorns of men who opposed the rebuilding. The book of Zechariah, Chapter 3, verses 1-9 also records the malicious accusations of Satan against Joshua the High Priest during that same time period. But the Lord Jesus, who is referred to as "My Servant the Branch", and "the Angel of the Lord" stood by him to defend Him. This is a good example of the Chief Lily defending all of His lilies whom He loves when they are surrounded by thorns. The "daughters" who are the thorns that Christ's Lily is surrounded by are the nations around Israel, who are set against her. Zechariah 2: 5 speaks of what the Lord would do to protect His Lily. "For I," says the Lord, will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst." Verse 7 says, "Up Zion!" "Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon." "For thus says the Lord of Hosts: He sent Me after glory, the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye." (Might we say also, "His Lily?") Christ will defend and help His persecuted and oppressed people.

We, as Christians have a responsibility, however to see to it that we are wise as serpents and innocent as doves. We have a responsibility to guard our souls from the way of perverse people. Turn with me to Proverbs 22: 4 and 5. "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life." "Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; he who guards his soul will be far from them." Ask yourself this afternoon if you are guarding yourself from the way of the perverse. Having physical power over other people and using force and violence to make your way in this life in the way of the perverse. It is the "thorns" of our text. Guard yourself from it and remember the words of Proverbs Chapter 2, verse 7 and following. "The Lord stores up sound wisdom for the upright.' He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints." "then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path." "When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the way of darkness; who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the

wicked; whose ways are crooked and who are devious in their paths." You see; these are the thorns. You have a responsibility as a Christian to run with righteous and holy people.

You probably remember the parable of the Sower in Matthew 13. When the sower of the seed, the Word of God, sowed some of the seeds, they fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up and choked them, and in the interpretation of the parable our Lord said in verse 22, "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and he becomes unfruitful." See to it that you guard you heart and your life, not only from worldly wicked men, who are well-pictured by thorns; but that you also guard yourself from the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches so that they will be able to bear fruit to God. Do not let the world steal away the beauty that Christ has given to you. I pray that each one of you, as one of His Lilies, would be able to well represent the beauty and glory and strength of the grace of Christ as the days go back until He shall call you to be with Himself.

