

Song of Solomon 2: 3; "Like the Apple Tree", Sermon # 22 in the series - "I am my Beloved's", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 10th, 2010, In the Afternoon Worship Service.

The Love that exists between Christ and His Church is a love that which longs to express itself in words. Words of love, words of prayer, and words of praise are all found expressed between them and recorded for us here in this book for our instruction. You and I need to understand that true love needs to learn to express itself. Very often you will find Christ and His Bride using similitudes in their descriptions of their love for each other. A picture paints a thousand words. The one who is in love wants very much for others around them to know what their beloved is like. They hope to see others around them come to approve of their choice of a husband or wife. Christ having described Himself to His Bride as being the Rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys, and having also encouraged His Bride, the Church, with a description which He gave to her as being like a lily among thorns; she is now so moved by the words of what He has promised that He would do for her, and how He sees her, that she now turns and gives to the daughters of Jerusalem a description of what her Beloved was like so that they too might see how wonderful He was. The daughters of Jerusalem are those who are close to the kingdom of God; perhaps even young believers who do not know themselves or Christ very well yet. But they have a great curiosity about Him and what it means to come to know Him, spiritually speaking. How can we come to know Christ? How can we come to know Him better unless He is described for us. This is only one of the many descriptions which the Bride gives to us in this book, of the beauty and glory of her husband-king; the Lord Jesus Christ. He is like an apple tree among the trees of the wood. She is comparing her beloved to a great and beautiful apple tree; a tree that has been of the greatest help and encouragement to her that she could possibly imagine. In comparing her beloved to an apple tree she is trying to convey three things. She is, first of all, trying to convey to her friends and acquaintances His greatness among all the trees of the wood. Second, she is trying to convey to them His fruitfulness among all the trees of the wood. And thirdly, she is trying to convey to them her own experience of Him. Thus she would win them to approve of her Beloved in every sense; that He was a great and good Lord and husband to her. We will save the third point for next Sunday, but let us now examine together her statements concerning her Beloved for ourselves and perhaps we too will decide that we would have this Christ for ourselves and become part of the one Bride whom He faithfully loves. And if you have already come to know Him, perhaps through this description, you will come to know Him better.

First of all - Let us think about Christ the Apple Tree as being a great tree among all the trees of the Wood.

She compares her beloved to a fruit tree. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." The Jewish Targum renders it a pome-citron, or citron apple tree, which is a very large tree. Sometimes men are compared to olive trees, sometimes to fir trees, sometimes to fig trees, and sometimes to oaks. But Christ is compared to the apple tree. This was the pome-citron tree, or citron apple tree, which John Gill says that this tree, "may be fitly used to express the greatness and excellency of Christ, who is possessed of all divine perfections; He who is over all, God blessed forever." The Lord Jesus is here compared to a great and fruitful tree. Men are often compared to trees in the Bible but they are not spoken of as great in themselves or bringing forth good fruit from themselves. Men are often compared to trees in the Bible because their life starts out small as a seed planted in the womb of their mother, which breaking out of that fertile ground in birth, grows up to be a sapling and then a tree. They may become a great tree; they may be impressive in their growth and in the strength of the many branches of the things that they do in their life; but it is only because God has given them that ability. Still; there is something lacking. There is something which prevents men and women from becoming very great by their own efforts. And this goes back all the way to the beginning. Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman, were created as the seeds of our whole race. They were planted in the garden of Eden. They were created in righteousness. They were given all the blessings of fellowship and communion with God. They were told by God to keep one commandment. They were told by God that they could eat of the fruit of the all the trees in the garden except one. That tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they ate it God said that they would die. I think that when people hear this tree described for them, they often think of this tree as having apples on it. If they were apples, they were apples which had the poison of death in them. The idea for the story of Snow White I think, must have been taken from the Bible. Here is a beautiful young girl, and she is convinced by a witch to eat an apple; an apple which looks very good, but which is poisonous. She eats it and falls into a death like sleep. Her body is carefully laid out in the woods by the sympathetic animals and a prince comes to find her there and kisses her and she awakens to rejoice and to marry him. Well the story that we as people are involved in has a reality to it of much greater and immense proportions, for us, who are descendants of Adam and Eve. They were both created beautiful by God in their original righteousness and given everything that they needed in the garden, and yet; Eve was deceived by the Serpent Satan to eat of the tree which had the fruit of death hanging on it. And you and I, as we are born into this world are as truly dead spiritually as we can be. We are among the trees of the forest and the tree of our life is dying. And if we do not eat from another tree, the tree of life, spiritually speaking, we shall most certainly die eternally. And to die eternally is to be separated from God's goodness and His love eternally. And to die eternally will mean never to eat good fruit again, ever. You say to me, "But I feel so much alive right now." "I am young and I am strong and everything in my physical body

speaks of life and health and fruitfulness. How could I ever be in such a state or come to the state as the one that you describe?" Adam and Eve could have taken the fruit from the tree of life, when they were first in the garden and before they sinned. But they chose not to. They could have taken and eaten and lived forever, but Eve was deceived by the serpent and Adam thought all was well and took the fruit and ate it. They thought that they were wise in choosing to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Many people today think that they are wise in not coming to Christ who is the apple tree of life.

Sometimes even trees which look very good, and which are very big and strong have some disease that is working within them. They begin to rot within, and then they have to be taken down, because they become dangerous. It is even so with sinful people who think that they do not need to have Christ. They are living among the many strong trees of the forest. They think that they are very strong and can continue on forever, living to themselves and living to the World and to their flesh. But God knows that He has to take the tree down. Judgment is God's strange work, but because He is righteous and just and holy; He will and He must do it. Every plant which is not planted by the heavenly Father will be rooted up it says in Matthew 15: 13. But this is not what He wants to do. And this is the reason that He sent Jesus to be the Savior of the World; so that you might become a good tree. It was so that you might be saved. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit, Jesus says in Matthew 12: 33. This is why the Father sent the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. He sent Him to become the apple tree; this great and unique tree which our text says was planted "among the sons." You are one of Adam's sons. You are one of his descendants. And as you grow up you will be bearing fruit, but without God's grace it will not be good fruit. But in hearing the gospel you have a chance to eat from another tree. The Lord Jesus Christ did not start out as you and I started out as a tree. We start out small and we may grow to be great if God ordains it. We may become great in our sinful selfishness, or we may become great in a good sense because He makes us great.

But the Lord Jesus Christ started out great and He made Himself small when He entered this life through His mother Mary's womb. He made Himself small. He was planted a little seed in His mother Mary's womb in conjunction with the plans of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit. He for whom all things were made, and through whom all things were made was very great from all eternity. But He willingly permitted Himself to be born a babe at Bethlehem; made poor and helpless and small so that He could come to save us. He became a seed and then began to grow as a tree. He grew up "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." He came forth "a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and as a branch growing out of his roots." He came forth from Bethlehem-Judah. "You Bethlehem-Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be the Ruler in Israel, who going forth are from of old, from everlasting. But in making Himself small and poor and

humbling Himself in the sight of God to keep all of His commandments, He became great in the eyes of God. And He will be in the eyes of men. "And He shall be great to the ends of the earth," it says in Micah 5: 4. Do you see that the life of the Lord Jesus is a pattern for you of how you can glorify God with your life? Many people try to become great on their own. But this is often based upon pride and self-righteousness. They are tall and great trees in their own estimation, and maybe in the eyes of many other people. But to be great in God's sight is to see yourself as little; just one of the trees of the forest which God has made. When you are little in your own eyes, then you are profitable and useful in God's eyes. Listen to what He told Saul, when Saul was making so many mistakes and falling into so much sin that he lost his kingdom. 1 Samuel 15: 17 - "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel?" You see God could use Saul mightily when he was little in his own eyes. As we grow as trees before the Lord, will you not pray and ask the Lord to let you see this holy pattern of humility which Jesus lived out? He stood strong in greatness in God's eyes because He was willing to make Himself of no reputation in the sight of men.

Secondly - The Bride is trying to convey to them His fruitfulness among all the trees of the wood.

How did the Lord Jesus become great as a tree? He became great in the eyes of God by being righteous. And it was in His being righteous that He became so very fruitful. Turn with me to the book of Proverbs Chapter 11, verse 30. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise." Now this was the express purpose of the Lord Jesus in conjunction with the plan of His all wise Father; to be able to come into the world and become a tree of life to poor perishing sinners. He was wise and He was holy in all His behavior. He was righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds. His righteousness became a tree of life for everyone who would pick from it. How was He to become this tree of life? He would do it by taking upon Himself our sins. Look at John Chapter 12, verse 20. "Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast." "Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'" "Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus." "But Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.'" "Most assuredly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." (fruit, in the margin) "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." The Lord Jesus is the grain of wheat sown into the ground in His death; which, if you will, grew up into a great tree and bore great fruit for every believer in Him. And He did this by being made a curse for us; we who are under the curse of the law for not keeping the commandments of God perfectly.

Turn over to Galatians Chapter 3, verse 10. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not

continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith, but the man who does them shall live by them. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. You see the curse of the law was not upon the person of the Lord Jesus until He went to the cross. This was because He was already and always doing and keeping God's commandments. But He went to the cross for us; for those who were indeed under the curse of God because we have not kept the commandments of God. Look at Deuteronomy 21: 22. "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God." But you see the Lord Jesus had not committed any sin worthy of his being hung on the tree, so He went to the cross so that He could bear the curse which was upon the person who would be trusting in Him to have that curse removed from them. In doing this, He became a tree of life laden with the fruit of His righteousness and grace hanging from His tree so that we who believe can pick it. We can pick this fruit of righteousness by faith. It will justify us in the sight of God. We will be declared righteous for Jesus sake. We can pick the fruits of righteousness just like they are apples of grace to be eaten, digested, and transformed spiritually into strength to manifest good attitudes of the fruit of the spirit and good works.

Turn with me to the book of Philippians, chapter 1, verse 9. "And this I pray, that you love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ. Jesus died so that you, dear believer could manifest a sincerity in your faith, so that you could live a godly life and not be offending God by the sinful way in which you once lived. Jesus died so that you could be filled with the fruits of righteousness. They come to you as you live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you. "For He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed." (1 Peter 2: 24) In conclusion - this apple tree of Christ's is laden with fruit, pressed down with all the weight of glory and grace hanging on its on its branches. And this tree is always bearing fruit, the fruit of righteousness of all different kinds. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." And it shall be this way all the way through this age and into the one to come. In the New Heavens and New Earth, there shall be nothing but righteousness. And there we shall dwell with Him forever. And Revelation 22, verse 1, says, "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." "In the middle of its street, and on either side of

the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him." And in verse 14 it says, "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." That is; that they would have a right to eternal life by their showing forth the fruits of righteousness which have been given to them by Jesus Christ. They do His commandments. In keeping of them there will find that they have this right--to enter the City. That is the New Jerusalem which will descend out of heaven from God. Verse 9 of Chapter 21 says, "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the Lamb's wife." The next time that I speak to you from this verse I will speak to about the Bride's experience under the shade of this tree.