

**John 3: 29; “He who Has the Bride”, Sermon # 22 in the series – “That all May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 9th, 2014,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

This morning I want to speak to you about our Lord Jesus Christ as the Heavenly Bridegroom of His Church. There is perhaps no earthly event which is so wonderful and beautiful and powerful as a wedding. And there is perhaps no spiritual subject which is so wonderful and beautiful and powerful as being spiritually betrothed and married to Christ. When we think of an earthly wedding and the marriage that follows the exchanging of those vows, all of life, and society, and true friendship, seems to revolve around it when Christ is in it. And this is how God would have it. When we think of spiritual betrothal and being in spiritual union with our Lord Jesus Christ we should realize that our whole understanding of what it means to know God and have eternal life revolves around that relationship. It is distinguishing the primary players in the drama of redemption which is being spoken of here by John the Baptist. There is the Bride and then there is the Bridegroom, and then there is the friend of the Bridegroom. In the verses which run before verse 29, we find John's disciples coming to him, telling him that Jesus' disciples were baptizing people, and that all (meaning many) of the prospective candidates for baptism were now coming to Jesus instead of John. John, who had the grace of humility, told them that "a man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from above; that is unless God Himself had appointed it. John then very appropriately asks his disciples to bear him witness that he had told them before that he was not the Christ, but he had been sent before Him." He then illustrated this truth by setting forth to their minds the beauty and glory of spiritual marriage to Christ in these 3 phrases. 1st – He who has the Bride is the Bridegroom. 2nd – The friend of the Bridegroom stands and hears Him. And 3rd – The friend of the Bridegroom rejoices greatly at the Bridegroom's voice. May the Lord give us grace to understand these wonderful spiritual realities.

1st of all – The Beauty and glory of spiritual marriage can be perceived in the phrase – He who has the Bride is the Bridegroom.

"He who has the Bride is the Bridegroom". Let us understand that when we are seeking to understand this term, "the Bride", in the Bible, both Old Testament and New, that it is expressly referring to those who are rightly related in a spiritual sense, to our Lord Jesus Christ. Each believer in the promise of Christ, either before or after Christ's 1st Coming, are spiritually united to Him by faith. He is the Savior of all men. He is the Lord of all men. He is the Heavenly Bridegroom of all believing people, both Old Testament or New whether they know and understand this kind of language or not. Think with me now about the wording in this verse that we are studying – "The Bridegroom has the Bride". The Bridegroom at that present time when John was speaking, had the Bride. That is, all believers are always in the mind and heart of Christ, to love and to cherish them. It is not worded here, the other way around; that you have Him, although if you believe in Him, you certainly do have Him; you have Him in your heart and you hold Him fast and love Him by the power of His precious grace. But John the Baptist is trying to describe to his own disciples, those who followed him, why they should look to Christ as their spiritual Bridegroom. He is saying here that all those who lived believing in the promise of God, who were looking forward by faith to the coming of the Messiah, in the Old Testament, and all those who have believed in Jesus the Son of God in the New Testament times since then, have been given to Christ by the Father, from before the foundation of the world, to be spiritually united to Him, to become His Bride. From all eternity, God the Father purposed that Christ would have His Bride, and you who believe would be a part of that great company of people whom no man can number who will be saved with an eternal salvation.

You can see this quite clearly if you will turn with me over to Psalm 45. That this is a Song of Love between Christ and His Church is very evident all the way through it. In verse 1 it says: "My heart overflows with a good theme; I recite my composition to the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." "You are fairer than the sons of men". "Grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever." And if you will look down at verse 6, you can see that the sons of Korah are not describing just any earthly king. "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom." This is a King who is also God that they are writing about; it is not David. It is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Right away here, we are given to know that the one who is being spoken of is fairer than the sons of men. This is the One whom men and angels shall worship forevermore. The Lord Jesus Christ alone, of all men, is sinless. He alone, of all men, is perfectly righteous. My friend, if you have never considered this, you should. Jesus Christ is unique among all the people who have ever lived because His heart and the record of the way that He spoke and lived are absolutely spotless and perfect. This thought, considered by itself alone, should be enough for each person who hears me now, to desire such a One to be their Savior and to desire such a One to come into their heart, so that they would be united with Him forever. But it is not so, because people do not understand how sinful their hearts really are. Consider, dear ladies, in the case of earthly thoughts of being married, if you were single and you knew that there was a perfect man around, would you not desire him to be your husband? He would be a man who would always speak to you in a kind and loving way; he would be a man who would always be thinking of you, how he could help you and encourage you and love you in a way that showed his own unselfish interest.

I think that it may be the case that there are many believing people in our own day who have not understood this metaphorical picture language of John the Baptist. It is many times used in the Bible, but they have not had it explained to them. They may think it a little strange to think that they, as believers are spiritually betrothed to Christ, and are now a part of His Bride. But every Christian who is able to think about it should be able to remember the "first love" that they had for Christ when they were first saved. Once you believed in Him, you wanted to give your whole life to Him; you wanted to walk with Him closely, and you thought of yourself as leaning spiritually on the arm of your Beloved. You wanted more than anything else to know His presence and feel His power working in you to lead you to do what was right. You knew and sensed His sufficiency of grace to meet and to satisfy all your hungerings and thirstings for righteousness. In your heart, you wanted nothing else than to know that He was with you and He was for you, and that He was lovingly teaching you everything that you needed to know to glorify the Father in heaven. You truly saw Him as your rock and your strength, and you believed that this, your love for Him, would continue without any diminishing or coldness all the way through this earthly life, and into eternity. You spoke to Him often in prayer and you told Him that you wanted Him to lead you into all of the truth of the Bible. You wanted to enjoy Him every day to the utmost. You very much wanted to obey His Word, because you remembered that in the New Testament He said to His disciples, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

But for some Christians, not all, their love for their Heavenly Bridegroom becomes lukewarm. It is not as though they want it this way. Somehow they lose track of Him. They become enamored with the world and the things of the world. In doing so, they commit a form of spiritual adultery, and God is not pleased with them in this condition. In the Old Testament times, this happened to King Solomon, who was given great wisdom and great riches by God; a man who was saved at a very young age. But in his investigating what would bring him satisfaction in this life, He left His first love. In his searching for what he thought were legitimate pleasures, he became a great earthly lover himself. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines, and thought that he was becoming wise when he actually was becoming a fool. Let us ask ourselves this all important question: Who was it that woke Solomon up and revealed to

him his foolishness? It was His Lord; He who has the Bride. Because it was Christ who held him, and worked His precious grace in his heart, Solomon in time was able to repent of his lengthy pursuit of beautiful women. His heart had been turned away from God by these women, because they worshiped false gods and taught him to do so too. And yet we find here, an amazing thing; that Christ's grace was so super-abundant that Solomon by inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote a whole book which is actually a Song, describing this spiritual love relationship between Christ and His Church. It is the book of Song of Solomon, which some have confused with a marriage manual for earthly marriage. Actually it is a spiritual marriage manual to teach you about your heart relationship with Jesus Christ your Lord. I will have more to say on this later in this message.

But let us proceed on to our 2nd Point – The friend of the Bridegroom stands and hears Him.

John the Baptist, as he beheld Christ, beheld him as his Savior and Lord. But he also saw himself as the Heavenly Bridegroom's friend. Is this something that you see yourself being, or becoming, dear Christian? John was called by God to be the forerunner of Christ; the person who introduced Christ to many others, as the Lord gave him power and unction to do so. What an important position it was. But, if you will notice, he was even more desirous to stand and hear Christ speak to him, and preach to him; even more than he desired to go on with His own calling and ministry. This was the most important part of his friendship with the Lord Jesus, his heavenly Bridegroom. This reality, which John declares, is something that every Christian man who wants to become a minister, or is a minister, should take notice of. Indeed it is something that every Christian man or woman who wants to glorify God should take notice of as well. John knew, and he rejoiced in this knowledge; that it was more important for him to stand and hear Christ than it was even for himself to continue to preach. This is something that every minister and every person who desires to preach or to serve Christ by sharing the gospel with others, will have to come to terms with. You are the friend of Christ when you desire to stand still and hear Him speak to your heart first, even more than you want to minister to others. It is a part of your love for Him that this is so. In fact, you will not be able to consistently and effectively speak a word to others, or minister to others, unless you can be still and hear Christ speak to you through His Word every day.

Do you remember the incident of Martha and Mary which is recorded for us over in Luke Chapter 10, verses 38-42? Here is how it reads. "Now it happened as they went that Jesus entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house." "And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." "But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?'" "Therefore tell her to help me." "And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.' "But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." The lesson here is pretty plain, is it not? If you do not have this blessed spiritual experience of sitting at Jesus' feet listening to Him speak to you through His Word, you will be cumbersed about with care in all of your serving Jesus. Indeed you will falsely think that others are wrong to be sitting and listening to sermons so much and reading their Bibles to have Jesus speak to their hearts and minds through this means. O no! You are a much more practical person. You have things to do for Jesus; places to go, service to render for Christ. You say: Why should I have to sit still and listen to sermons, or have my regular devotions with Christ where I ask Him to speak to me through His Word? It is because it is needful for your strength and sanity spiritually. It is because ultimately only one thing is really needful. Jesus says, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things." Mary has chosen the good part. Mary has chosen the better part, and that will not be taken away from her. Is this not an encouraging word from the

Lord Jesus to your soul today? Jesus wants you to stand still and listen to Him speak to you, through His Word, each and every day. He is saying that this is the good part; it is the good portion, and He will providentially so order it that it will not be taken away from you should you decide to stand still and listen. Let me ask you if you are doing this? Is the attitude of your heart that you will stand and listen, or sit at Jesus' feet and learn from Him? Then you shall indeed have something to give to others that will be accompanied with His blessing and power. If you rush on, dear Christian without taking this time, you will be anxiously careful and troubled about many things. That is how the text reads here in the original Greek. You will be disturbed or hurried about by the many taking place in your life. And could it be, that your love for Him will grow lukewarm; you might not sense His presence and power in your life, and you may even begin to doubt whether He is truly with you in the things that you are doing for Him? All of this could be, and can be prevented, if we will remember what Jesus is looking for from us. He is looking for us to stand and hear him.

Then 3rd - The friend of the Bridegroom rejoices greatly at the Bridegroom's voice.

"He who has the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice." "Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled." John's ministry was almost over, and yet he was able to rejoice. Will it make you sad dear Christian when your ministry is over, or will you be able to rejoice? John rejoiced greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice. If you are learning the lesson that I am trying to show you from these verses, you will be able to rejoice, even at the end of your life. It should be a joy for each one of us to realize that the whole cause and kingdom of Christ is being upheld by the Bridegroom's voice. Even when we fail, He goes on to triumph, because He is the perfect One; He is the strong One. Oh, that is no excuse for our sinful backslidings. In love our Lord will chasten us for them all. He will instruct us and teach the way that we should go. He will guide us with His eye upon us. But let it be known that my heavenly Bridegroom has a love which will not let me go. You might remember this hymn by George Matheson, but listen to the words – "O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee." "I give Thee back the life I owe, that in Thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be." "O Light that followest all my way, I yield my flick'ring torch to Thee; My heart restores its borrowed ray, that in Thy sunshine's blaze its day may brighter, fairer be." "O Joy that sleekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to Thee; I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain that morn shall tearless be." "O cross that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly from Thee; I lay in dust life's glory dead, and from the ground there blossoms red life that shall endless be."

Let us rejoice this morning as John did, that we hear the Bridegroom's voice in His Word. He does indeed speak you to our hearts through that Word. Jesus has overcome sin and death, and He will bring all of us who believe in Him, to know Him better, and eventually He will bring them to glory. It ought to cause us to rejoice that it is ultimately He who holds us and not we who hold Him. If it were up to us to hold on to Him at every moment, we would miserably fail. But He is the One who is holding us, keeping His Covenant vows, fulfilling God's law on our behalf; dying for our many sins, so that we might be sanctified by His will, not our will. If we are His friends let us seek to be useful in His service while we live. If we are willing to learn, He is certainly willing to teach. Are you willing to stand still and listen to His voice? If you know Christ is your heavenly Bridegroom He will be bringing you to heaven when you die. Are you rejoicing now, even in your heart, that you will soon meet your Lord face to face? Don't be discouraged over your past record. Do what St. Paul encouraged himself to do in Philippians 3: 12. "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold me." "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in

Christ Jesus." Yes, let us press on to know the Lord, like John did, like Solomon did, and like Paul did. Let us rejoice that even when we die our strong Redeemer will have others upon the earth who will serve Him and love Him, and stand and listen to Him as His friends. Dear Christian, the Lord Jesus, your heavenly Bridegroom, would have you to understand that you have much to learn about His love for you. Remember that it was Solomon who wrote the book of Song of Songs. When he wrote this blessed book Solomon came to understand something more of the love of His Savior for him. He came to know that the Bridegroom was holding him in spiritual life, all the time of his backsliding. The Lord Jesus was keeping His soul, and keeping him in his faith. It was the Lord who disciplined him and brought him back to think in right ways about what he should do to serve God. Those persons who will trust in the counsel of their heavenly Bridegroom Jesus Christ, are kept in His love. He will watch over them in perfect faithfulness. He loves each and every one who has taken Him as their Savior and spiritual husband, each and every member of His body, with a perfect love. This is why John the Baptist could say, "Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled".