

Song of Solomon 4: 1- 11 and 5: 9-16; "The Beauty and Strength of Marital Love", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 18th, 2007 in the Morning Worship Service.

The love of a husband and a wife for each other is intended by God, in its very design, to demonstrate the love that Christ has for His Church. It says so in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 25. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her." And verses 28 and 29, "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself." "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the Church." And so we can conclude that marital love is very significant and very important in God's sight. If you are not married this morning, there will be something of great value here for you as well; for if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you are in a married state already, spiritually speaking. And I am sure that your relationship with Christ can be strengthened by the same things that I will say to those who are married, which you will apply spiritually to your relationship to Christ. You have nothing to be ashamed of, in thinking about all that the Lord Jesus can do for you, to keep you satisfied and happy in the single state, just as much as any of the married couples here today. There is blessed spiritual union that exists and a regular and constant communion for you every day with your spiritual husband. Listen to the words of Isaiah 54: 4 and following. "Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore." "For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth."

What can be a greater blessing than spiritual union and communion with the living, risen Lord Jesus Christ? In marital love upon this earth, there is the added experience of the man and the woman becoming one flesh, and having that one flesh relationship as long as each one physically lives. But "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him." That marriage shall never be broken by separation in death, and it shall never end. So today I want to speak of 3 things which are important for you to consider if you want marital love to flourish.

1st of all – Descriptive praise of the particular physical characteristics of your spouse, is important to strengthen a marriage.

(Chapter 4, Verses 1-5 and Chapter 5, Verses 9-15)

In Chapter 4, verse 1 we find the Bridegroom saying, "Behold you are fair, my love!" "Behold you are fair!" And then he follows up this general statement with a description of particular characteristics of the physical person of the Bride. This is the description of his interest in her whole person in its particulars. Although there may be many beautiful women in the world; in marriage the husband has vowed to take an interest in her womanly beauty in particular. The loving husband is obviously and plainly interested in all the beauty of every aspect of his wife's physical person. And he not only admires that beauty, but he describes it, he declares it, and he praises her in regard to it. "Behold, you are fair, my love!" This, men, is one of things that you are called to engage in, in marriage; to praise the beauty that has been given to you by God in the person of your wife. This is love; when we tell our wife that she is fair, she is beautiful; but then, and even more, when we go on to think about that beauty every day after the wedding, as the marriage goes on. Your wife wants to know from you what it is that you think is beautiful about her physical

person. Notice that the Bridegroom describes and praises many aspects of her physical person. He is doing this when they are alone and in private. He speaks particularly of her eyes, her hair, her teeth, her lips, her mouth, her temples, her neck and her breasts. This should be a clue to how we as husbands can show our wives this kind of love. It is when we consider these physical characteristics one by one, of what our wife is like, and when we mention to our wife the particular things that we admire; that in our declaration and praise of this beauty, that one important aspect of love is being shown and the marriage will be strengthened. This applies also to wives with their husbands. The Bride in Chapter 5, verse 10 and following speaks of her husband's complexion, his head, his hair, his eyes, his cheeks, his hands, his legs, his countenance, and his mouth. This is a far cry from flattery. Flattery will say certain fine things in order for the person doing it to get something from you. But the descriptive praise of a wife which flows from a husband's admiration and appreciation of who she is, is truly an act of love. It is the truth of what he perceives and has thought upon, in regard to her; that is what strengthens the relationship in marriage. The beauty and strength of marriage is in admiring and praising, in our spouse, their particular and perhaps even peculiar characteristics of physical beauty.

You will notice that these descriptions which are given are a little unusual at points. The Bridegroom describes his wife's eyes as being like dove's eyes, her teeth are as a flock of shorn sheep, her neck is like the tower of David and her breasts are like two fawns. I think that if you try to picture these things you might come up with a woman who physically might look like an very unusual woman. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder. And God has not made every woman to look exactly alike in their beauty. And this is no doubt a great part of what God's wisdom consists of, in regard to people that he has created. Husbands, God has created your wife just for you. It may be true that some women are more beautiful than others, or some men more handsome than others in certain ways. To a husband, he is interested in his own wife's beauty in particular. To a wife, she is interested in her man alone. They are interested in each other's physical person and they continue to pay attention to the body of their spouse even when age is taking its toll upon them. If you are a husband should still study your wife's beauty even though it may be 30 or 40 or 50 years of marriage; and then tell your wife your appreciation for her being your wife. Wives, you should also make a study of your husband so that you can try to speak well of him, whether you are alone in his presence or whether you are asked about him in a more public context. Verse 9 of chapter 5 says, "What is you beloved more than another beloved, O fairest among women? "What is your beloved more than another beloved," they ask. She speaks of how excellent he is in so many ways.

Remember that the book of Song of Solomon is written with the deeper spiritual meaning of Christ and His Bride the Church behind the words that we find here. Remember that all flesh is as grass and the flower of grass. "The grass withers and the flower fades," and so will your flesh and that of your mate. But the appreciation of each other's physical body's beauty ought to be a continuing and on-going and lasting thing in your marriage. If you are not married, bless the Lord that you can know that strength of his grace to remain pure to Him and true to Him in your singleness. Remember to do all the things that I have spoken of here, in relation to your husband Christ, in a spiritual sense.

Think of the heavenly Bridegroom as He describes you as His Bride. He thinks of every aspect of the needs and desires of your physical being and your soul. He considers you fair because of His good work of grace in your heart and mind. He sees the strength and beauty of your faith in Him. Your eyes are "doves eyes" to Him in your submission to His

good and perfect will for your life. He sees that your lips which speak of the power of His scarlet blood, and your mouth which confesses that He alone is your wisdom and strength, are beautiful and lovely to Him. He sees that your neck is not stubbornly set to do your own will, but His and that your faith is strong enough to fight spiritual battles for Him. He sees that your spiritual breasts are ready to be the consolation of spiritual children born to you, to feed them the good milk of God's Word. Truly, when you covenant with Christ to take Him to be your Savior and Husband, He sees the beauty of your soul, and He sees that you aim at the chastity of your body, and He will speak to you through His word to convince you of His love. But let us go on to our second consideration of what will strengthen and cause marital love to flourish.

2nd – Time alone together and time apart, together as a couple, is important to strengthen a marriage. (Verses 6-8 of Chapter 4)

You hear the Bridegroom saying in verse 6, "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense." He is going to go away for a time, but he does not want to be alone in it. He wants to take his spouse with him. "You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you." "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon." "Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lion's dens, from the mountains of leopards." This is something that everyone who is married should take notice of. If a man feels that he needs to go away and to be refreshed, should he take separate vacations and have many activities separate from his dear wife? I doubt it very much. The Bridegroom says here, "Come away with me." He may be speaking in the first place about their honeymoon, and spending that time together, but I believe that this is more a permanent mindset in the mind of the Bridegroom. If he is going somewhere on vacation, he will be thinking of how he can take her with him.

A loving husband is one who will seek to plan times when he and his wife can go away together and be refreshed together. He will think of how they can spend time together and do things together, just the two of them. This is a good way to keep a marriage strong. If you have not done this for awhile, husbands, it is probably because you are so busy with your work or with some hobby or project, that it has escaped your mind that your wife is probably sitting at home wishing that something like this could take place. It is one good way to keep the romance in your relationship. A woman does need to be romanced in this kind of a way; to think about and look forward to certain planned getaways that you will take her on. You don't have to go around the world, but it might be very refreshing to just travel a few hundred miles and go to a scenic place or have dinner together in a little resort town somewhere; just you and her. This will allow you to talk over a hundred different things that are important to both of you and to really enjoy each other's company in a different setting than the usual. Plan these times together so that you will both enjoy it. Husbands, do things with your wife that she will enjoy doing; something that causes you to have to take notice of what it is that pleases her, and what she likes. Talk over things that you also would like to do, but ask her if she is interested in it before you simply conclude that this is what you are going to do.

Similarly, those of you who are single need to occasionally find time to get away and do something which would involve you with other people, and which would cause you to appreciate doing something with other singles or friends that will refresh you and fit you to return to the everyday routine of life. Again, you do not have to go half way around the world in order to do this. Travel to a city or town or scenic place with a godly companion or companions and seek to be refreshed by what God has done or is doing in other places

occasionally. Think of the greatness and goodness of God in what He has done in His creation and in giving you people who you like to spend time with. If you don't presently have this, pray about it and ask the Lord to bring it about.

3rd – Loving looks and words are important to strengthening your marriage.

(Verses 9-11 of Chapter 4)

Look at what verses 9-11 say. "You have ravished my heart, my sister my spouse; You have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes, with one link of your necklace." "How fair is your love, My sister, my spouse." "How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes than all spices!" "Your lips, O my spouse, drip as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under your tongue, and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon." I wonder if sometimes that we who are married think enough about the power of our looks and our words? The Bridegroom is saying here that it only took "one look of the Bride's eyes to ravish his heart. Do you realize, you ladies who are married, just how important and significant one look of cheerful, loving affirmation is to your husband? It is possible to convey almost every thought of your mind and every emotion of your heart, whether you are a husband or a wife, by a simple look. Looks are very important way to convey patience and kindness and love. Rolling your eyes, or letting your eyes "glaze over" on a regular basis when you are with your spouse, shows what? It shows that you do not really want to consider any further, what may be a matter of great concern to your spouse. Your mind is already made up, and your conclusions are already drawn. But on the other hand, when you are conveying love in your looks, your face is beaming with affirmation and a willingness to listen and to consider what is on the heart and mind of your partner.

Do you realize the power, ladies, that it has upon your husband, of your doing something as simple as wearing a necklace that your husband has bought for you, because he bought it for you? When he understands that you pay attention to the little details of what pleases him, how much it means to him! Something like wearing his favorite perfume can be something that pleases him more than having a glass of wine or his favorite beverage. Speaking words of love and affirming him for all that he does for you are like "honey and milk" under your tongue to him. This is the fuel that fires the holy romance of love every day of the year, not just on special occasions. Let it be the same for husbands as well. The Bride says in Chapter 5, verse 16, "His mouth is most sweet." Ask yourself husbands, if this is what your wife says about you; that the things that you say to her and about her have that sweetness of honey and milk under your tongue. Honey and milk; sweetness and nourishment in the words that you say; in the things that you do.

And to all of us who are married to the Lord; will you not remember that your spiritual husband, the Lord Jesus Christ, is ravished by one look of your eyes as well? He can tell whether you love and appreciate all that He has done for you by His grace. He is refreshed by your love when you look at Him by faith in this way. Listen to Charles Spurgeon on this. "Hearken then, to what the Lord Jesus says to thee tonight, by his Holy Spirit, from this song!" "Thy love, poor, feeble, and cold though it be, is very precious unto the Lord Jesus, in fact it is so precious, that he himself cannot tell how precious it is." 'He does not say how precious, but he says, 'how fair.'" "This is an expression that men use when they do not know how to describe anything." "They lift up their hands, they put in a note of exclamation, and they say, 'How fair!' 'How precious!' "How much better is thy love than wine.'" "The fact is, that the Lord Jesus values our love at such a price, that the Holy Spirit when he dictated this Song of Solomon, could not see any word in all human language that was large enough to set forth Christ's estimation of our love." "Have you

never thought of Christ's love to you, till your heart has been melted, while your beloved spoke to you, till the tears have run down your eyes, and you have believed you could do as Mary Magdalene did, kiss his cold feet, and wash them with your tears, and wipe them with the hairs of your head?" "Now can you believe it?" "Just what you think of Christ's love, Christ thinks of yours." "You value his love, and you are right in so doing; but I am afraid that still you undervalue it." "He even values your love, if I may so speak, he sets a far higher estimate upon it than you do; he thinks very much of little, he estimates it not by its strength, but by its sincerity." "Ah," he says, "he does love me, he does love, I know he does; he sins, he disobeys me, but still I know he loves me, his heart is true, he does not love me as I deserve, but still he loves me." "Jesus Christ is delighted with the thought that his people love him, this cheers and gladdens him." Let me ask you this morning if you are considering that your Savior and Lord and Heavenly Bridegroom feeds on your love for Him? He is ravished by one glance of your eyes in faith, one link of your necklace of loving obedience which you wear for Him. Will this not move you to love Him more?

And then 4th – Considering your spouse as your best friend is important to strengthening your marriage. (Verse 16 of Chapter 5)

"His mouth is most sweet, yes, he is altogether lovely." "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." This is what the Bride says to other women about her husband. She calls him her friend. Ah, this is one of the best descriptions of a husband that could possibly be. He is her beloved and he is her friend. What kind of friendship does it take to strengthen marital love? Well, a friend is a companion, but much more than a companion. You could be spending a lot of time with someone and still they might not be your friend. The old dictionary that I refer to says that a friend is one who "you are attached to by feelings of personal regard; an intimate." In other words, you have a high regard for them and share many things together. You could spend much time with someone and yet not have a high regard for them.

To be a friend you must show yourself friendly. It says this in the book of Proverbs, chapter 18, verse 24. "A man who would have friends must himself to be friendly." You could be with someone on a regular basis and still not show yourself friendly. What then must a person do? The Dictionary, again, says under the word friendly, "it is being favorably disposed; inclined to approve, help, or support; as in things or influences suitable to one's comfort or convenience." The friend, in other words, is one who is favorable to you, one who looks out to be a help, one who seeks to affirm and approve of all that you are doing, one who is interested in your comfort and well-being at every level of your existence. If you and your friend are Christians you are concerned that your relationship be one of stimulating one another to love and good deeds. It is not envying one another or provoking one another. The husband-friend is one who will provide, protect, love and care for you, and be with you in all the major and many of the minor situations of your life. Proverbs 17: 17 says, "A friend loves at all times. This is what a husband and wife do for each other in their friendship. There is a "constant kindness and faithfulness that is being sought after and developed in their relationship. When this kindness breaks down, they are both grieved about it and by prayer they will humble themselves to find the way to speak to each other, to ask for each other's forgiveness, and to mend and restore and rebuild the relationship again.

The husband-friend will so lead his wife in the various situations of life that she will be able to lean upon him. Her heart can trust in Him. She can take counsel with him over the most important matters of her soul as it says in Proverbs 27: 9, "Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel."

That "hearty counsel" can be translated, "the counsel of the soul." If the husband and wife disagree about some matter as they talk; if the grace of Christ is at work in their souls, she as his wife and friend, still knows that he will be taking her into consideration in being able to work through all of the issues of concern with patience and kindness. She learns that she can depend upon his thinking about her thoughts and her concerns. He will not ignore them, he will answer them in a caring and considerate way. She is confident that he will care for her when she is weakest or when she has made her biggest mistakes. He will not let her drop. You see this pictured well in Song of Solomon 8: 3. "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me." And verse 5, "Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?"

This kind of love between husband and wife can be seen growing stronger as Christ and His love is placed in the center of their relationship. Are you married to Jesus Christ? You are if you believe in Him. Do you know of His dying love for you at Calvary's cross? Do you understand how He acts as your spiritual husband? Then this is how you should act as a husband-friend or a wife-friend in your relationship. Remember the words of Song of Solomon chapter 8 and verses 6 and 7. "Set me as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death..." "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it." These are the words of the Bride to the Bridegroom. She is saying to her husband, "Keep me as close to you, as a King does who has a seal to stamp all of his official documents and thereby they recognize His person and his words and his works." Let me be that close.

And you and I, who are married to Christ want that, do we not? Keep me close to you Lord Jesus, clinging to you in love, knowing your love, representing your person and words and power and works in such a way that other people can see that I belong to you. And let it be Lord, that my husband or my wife will see this very thing as well. Then "many waters will not quench our love, many floods will not drown it." All of the trials and difficulties of this life can be faced when the strength and the beauty of marital love is seen in this holy and humble way.