

**Song of Solomon 5: 2-4; “The Love Visit of Christ”, Sermon # 42 in the series – “I am My Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012, In the Afternoon Worship Service.**

We have seen in past studies that Christ loves to hear your voice in prayer, dear believer, for things which are important to Him. What is most important to Him is your cultivating your heart relationship with Him on every level of your life, so that you will abide in Him and bear much fruit for Him. Notice in verse 1 that Christ answered her prayers immediately. He came into the garden of her heart secretly, and He was gathering those fruits which were pleasing to Him. All this was unbeknownst to her at first. This is what Christ does with each and every true believer in Him. At certain times, He comes and He lets you know that His Divine presence is with you.

He has gathered His myrrh with His spice, and has eaten His honeycomb with His honey. He has drunk His wine with His milk. His desire has been to gather up everything good and eat everything sweet which He finds in your devotion to Him and your works for Him. And then, after He has gathered these spiritual fruits, He is ready for something more. He is ready to pay you a surprise love visit. This is what we want to speak of this afternoon; greater spiritual intimacy with Christ. And then the next time that I preach to you, I will speak to you about what follows from this initial refusal to let Christ in, to have all of your love.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – I want you to understand that many believers are not ready for Christ’s love visit; they are asleep, but their heart is awake.** (verse 2a)

“I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my beloved!” “He knocks, saying, “Open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one..” I believe that many Christians are even as the Shulamite in this passage. See if my description fits your heart situation. Sometimes your prayers are answered, immediately, and Christ comes to your heart and mind and gives you that sweet assurance that He is pleased with what you are doing for Him in the general course of your Christian life. He has looked it over and He sees that you want to be doing more for Him and you want to be more holy in all of your behavior.

But He also sees that something is lacking in your heart obedience to Him. And so, He makes plans to come closer and let you see what His heart is like, and then what your heart is really like in response to Him. He does not do this to put you to shame, but He does this in order that your love for Him might grow. When you pray to have intimate fellowship and communion with Christ, when you pray for a closer walk with Him, sometimes you will be given an answer unexpectedly, in a way in which you will not have been looking for Him to answer you. This is especially the case with Christ’s love visits to your soul. Our sovereign, loving Lord has certain special times when He comes knocking on your heart’s door to have intimate spiritual communion with you, and the question of this afternoon in relation to this text is this: Are you ready for it?

Will you be in a right spiritual condition to receive your Beloved when He comes calling? The answer for all Christians initially is no. “I sleep, but my heart is awake”. What is the Bride saying? She is saying that part of her is asleep and part of her is awake. This is surely the spiritual condition of all believers. For an unbeliever is not simply asleep in their sin, but they are dead in their trespasses and sins. They sleep the sleep of death, until God raises them up from their death in sins, and makes them alive together with Christ. They are unconscious and unconcerned about the reality of spiritual truth and the demands of God that they would live a spiritually minded life.

But in the life of the believer, he is surely awake and alive to spiritual things, but here we see that there is still a tendency to fall back to sleep; not to be alert and watchful, but rather to be drowsy in terms of what we ought to be thinking and doing in living our life to God and our Christ. Let me demonstrate this to you from the New Testament Scriptures. Turn with me to Romans 13: 11. “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.” “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” “Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” “Let us walk

properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.” “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

The Apostle Paul is exhorting the believers at Rome to wake up to the reality that time is quickly passing away; that their salvation, their complete deliverance from the Old Man of “the flesh” would take place through their physical death. This would be coming sooner than they thought. This salvation was much nearer than when they had first believed. The night of this present life was far spent, and the eternal Day was at hand for each of them then, and for us here now. Our life here is a night in comparison to the eternally radiant day that is coming for every believer. Therefore we ought to keep two things constantly in our minds. We ought walk properly, and we ought to labor on for Christ while we have this short time.

How do we walk properly? By being alert and watchful against temptations and sins which we may fall into if we do not properly guard our hearts. Sins of living for this world; living a party lifestyle; revelry and drunkenness. Living a sensual lifestyle; lewdness and lust. Living a selfish and unloving lifestyle; living in strife and envy. This is what it means to be “asleep” in the sense that is being spoken of here in our text in Song of Solomon. To be asleep is to be unconscious or insensible to the demands of God and Christ as they are laid out for you in the Scriptures.

To be awake to the love demands of Christ is seen in our actively pursuing and keeping His commandments, such as those listed here in Romans 13: 8-10. “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.” “For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery’, ‘You shall not murder’, ‘You shall not steal’, ‘You shall not bear false witness’, ‘You shall not covet’, and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” Then comes our statement, “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.”

The sleep is in relation to not keeping these commandments, and instead falling into sins of various sorts. And this is what is taking place in the picture of our text. Christ has come to the door of His beloved spouse, and He is knocking to gain entrance; to have a deeper more meaningful interaction with every true church and every true believer. To have that deeper more meaningful fellowship is going to require your consciously letting the Lord Jesus in to the deepest recesses of your heart; to do a work in you, so that you will walk properly and labor more diligently for Him. “Yes,” you say, “But did I not receive the New Heart when I was regenerated and became a Christian?” “Why can’t I just automatically assume that I now have this power to be awake and the strength to face these temptations to sin and to be lazy?”

The answer is, that is true that you are awake to these things in the general and on-going sense because of the New Birth, but because of the weakness of your flesh, there is a struggle to keep from going to sleep spiritually. This is why we are instructed by Paul to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and to “make no provision for the flesh”. Putting on Christ will keep us awake spiritually, awake to righteousness and good deeds. Making provision for the flesh will put us into the position of great drowsiness and even sleep if we allow ourselves to fall into it. As long as we have the flesh with us, there will be this tendency to want to sleep spiritually, and to not answer Christ’s love demands. The struggle in the believer which is seen in Romans 7 and in Galatians 5: 16-26 is what is well pictured here in Song of Solomon 5: 2. “I sleep, but my heart is awake”. This is why Christ pays us these love visits; it is to wake us up to our responsibilities to Him personally.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – I want you to understand that many believers do not comprehend the urgency of Christ’s love for them.**

He greatly desires to come in to your heart and have all of your love. (verse 2b) “It is the voice of my beloved!” “He knocks, saying, ‘Open for me, my sister, my love, My dove, my perfect one; for my head is covered with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.’” Many people have tried to say that the Book of Song of Solomon has no connection with the New Testament Scriptures, that there are no references to it in the New. Well, if this picture here does not disprove that notion, I do not

know what will. The picture is of Christ knocking on the door of the Church's heart. It is also of His knocking at the heart's door of every individual Christian's heart. Revelation 3: 20 – "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

These verses were given by our Lord Jesus Christ through John, His beloved disciple, to give to the church in Laodicea. They were a church which was very much asleep to their responsibilities to Him. In their works they were neither "cold nor hot" He says to them in verse 15. They were lukewarm, and because of that He was ready to "vomit them out of His mouth." They said that they were rich and had need of nothing. But Christ says to them that they were "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." The picture in this text in Song of Solomon is similar to the one in Revelation, but it is also somewhat different as we shall see.

Christ is not coming to simply spiritually dine and have fellowship here. He is coming here as a lover. He is coming to have your heart, and to take you in His spiritual arms, ask you how it is that you will show Him your deepest love. Christ calls the Shulamite by all of the terms of endearment that He has called her before in this book; "my sister, my love (friend or companion), my dove, my perfect one. He calls her one more here; My "undefiled one". He is addressing her as one whom He has particularly loved and favored with His grace and condescension. He has justified her by the shedding of His precious blood.

And He has also become unto her sanctification, wisdom, and redemption, as it says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1: 30. Therefore He sees her as pure by His grace. Therefore since He has done all this for us, we should let Him in for deeper communion. He came to Gethsemane at night and asked His closest disciples to pray with Him for one hour, and they could not do it, but rather fell asleep. He went off a stone's throw and prayed and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood. Christ's head was covered with this kind of dew. His locks were covered with the drops of the night; all of the cold dew of what He knew it would take for Him to redeem His Church through His sufferings. Christ had no place to lay his head while He fulfilled His earthly ministry. Christ was cold with the dew while Peter "warmed himself by the fire."

When He calls His Bride by these names, Christ is reminding her of all of all that He has suffered for, to bring her into relationship with Himself. And now He has come to pay His Bride a visit and to know of all of her love for Him. He is standing outside the door of your heart, O believer, and His head is "covered with the dew, and His locks with the drops of the night." Will you open to Him? Will you remember all that He has done for you? Will you not remember that you are united to Christ in spiritual betrothal and yet it might be possible that you will not open to Him in order to have the deeper more meaningful communion with Him? Christ is looking for your love to give yourself in serving Him in His kingdom work.

**Now 3<sup>rd</sup> – I want you to understand that, at least initially, this kind of love demand is refused; and we will see what comes of that refusal.** (verses 3-6) "I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again?" "I have washed my feet; how can I defile them? The Bride here, having heard Christ outside calling to her, now begins to make excuses to herself as to why she cannot comply with His request. She says that she has taken off her robe. I think that this is a clear reference to the robe of righteousness with which every believer is clothed. It is one of the main garments of salvation listed in Isaiah 61, verse 10. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has covered me with a robe of righteousness." The robe of righteousness is given by Christ for the believer to wear all through their Christian life. God always sees the believer in Christ's righteousness; not their own, which is filthy rags. How then can it be taken off? It can only be taken off in the mindset; not in the reality.

She also says, "I have washed my feet; how can I defile them?" How can I dirty them? The washing of the feet is a picture of sanctification. "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you

were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” And the Lord Jesus said to Peter, in John 13: 8, “If I do not wash you, (wash your feet) you have no part in Me.” “Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!’” “Jesus said to him, “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” So we see here the truth. The Bride had taken off her robe, and taken off her shoes and washed her feet and was in bed, seeking her own ease and rest and not in any mood to labor for Christ in the least during this night when Christ would meet with her.

What was she saying? She was saying, I realize that you have done all of these precious and powerful things for me Lord, but I do not want to have to get up and exert myself to do the least thing that is inconvenient for me, even though you are calling me to a deeper love relationship with Yourself. To respond to your love visit is too great a chore; I do not want it. I want my life to be comfortable and pleasant even if your cause languishes, and even though I am not pursuing righteousness and faithfulness to You, as I ought. She wrongly thought that living the Christian life was receiving from Christ everything necessary for life and godliness, without there ever being any love demands that would be placed upon her by Christ.

Salvation she knew was not by the works of the law. She knew herself to be under grace and not law. But she would use that truth to justify her own neglect of loving Christ and opening to Him to let Him in to show her what He would have her to do for Him. That is putting off the robe. Christ is faithful to keep the justified believer in Himself, whether she puts off the robe or not. He was knocking to see if she would love Him enough to live according to His word, and whether she would spread His gospel. Romans 10: 15 – “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring the glad tidings of good things. Ephesians 6: 14 and 15 – “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace...”

No, she did not want the inconvenience of having to let Christ in, in this way, at night. Beloved brethren, we live in a dark world that desperately needs our Christ. For the gospel to go forward and for Christ’s kingdom to advance, we need to let Christ into our hearts in a deeper more meaningful way; the way that will consider Him, what He wants of each one of us to do in righteousness and to promote truth. It is true that we can never lose our robe of righteousness. He has given it to us to wear forever. It is true that He has washed us in sanctification, and that we are to wash and cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit. We may however, if we do not press on to know the Lord better, fall into this shameful predicament of living for ourselves and the world, and then not opening to Jesus when He comes to us in His love visits.

He usually comes at a most inconvenient time. Behold, His hand is at the latch of the door. Does your heart yearn for Him, now that you have heard His voice? Check yourself now and see. Are you giving all diligence to add to your faith moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love?” “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is why the Lord is knocking and trying to pay you a love visit. He wants more of your love to come to Himself, for greater service to advance His kingdom.