

Song of Solomon 4: 3-5; “The Church’s Militant Love for Christ”, Sermon # 36 in the series – “I am my Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 12th, 2011, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is being pictured for us here as a spiritual body. This goes hand-in-hand with what the New Testament epistles of the Apostle Paul tell us about the Church. 1 Corinthians 12, verse 12 says, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” And in verse 14 he says, “For in fact the body is not one member but many.” And he goes on to speak of the foot and the hand, the ear and the eye of the body, each as representing a believer with a certain spiritual gift which they should use. He even goes on to speak of those members of the body which are weaker and less honorable and less presentable as being necessary to the body. In these verses in Song of Solomon 4, verses 1-5, we find that Christ has written a love letter to His Bride the Church. And in it He has described for us 7 parts of her body. The metaphors that He uses are related to the gifts and graces which He has given to her. Christ, because of His redemptive work on her behalf, sees His Church, all during this present Church age; not as unattractive, but rather as fair and beautiful because of these graces. He is extolling her virtues and commending the wholesome beauty of her good works, and the way that she adorns herself, for Him. He is describing the Church in her present militant state, but He is looking forward to the time of her triumphant state which she shall have clothed herself in her finest garments and when she shall have prepared herself for the marriage. These preparations are taking place all during this Church age, but especially in the time of the Millennium, when she shall sit down with her Beloved (spiritually speaking) at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Church’s militant state will become triumphant in the time of the Millennium, and the kingdom shall be given to the saints. (Daniel 7: 27) But the marriage will only be consummated when we see our Bridegroom face to face in His Second Coming. It says in Revelation 19: 7 – “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” “And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” “Then he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” “And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’” So we are betrothed to Christ now; we are spiritually united to Him in marriage when we believe in Him. And as the Bride of Christ is gathered from all the generations of Church history, she makes herself ready by righteous deeds. So these verses picture the Church of Jesus Christ in her present militant state; militant, but in love with her husband. She is described by 7 metaphors. We have looked at the Church’s eyes, hair, teeth, and lips in the previous sermon. Now this afternoon, we want to look at the last 3 metaphors and discover the meaning of the Church’s militant love for Christ.

1st of all – The Metaphor of the temples of the Church. (Verse 3b)

“Your temples behind your veil are like a piece of pomegranate.” In reading John Brown’s Paraphrase of the Song of Solomon I came across this passage related to verse 3. He puts this as though it is the words of Christ to the Bride - “Thy humble, constant, cordial, and fervent prayer, praise, and spiritual conference, turning chiefly on the mystery of a bleeding Redeemer, are very profitable, pleasant, and distinct; making thy heart sound, thy soul enflamed, and thy conscience purged, with my dying love ; and that through my bloody suffering, thy service is presented to, and accepted of God :—and in my esteem, thy self-abasement and modesty, thy shame and rejection of thy best services before me, render thee notably beautiful and comely. I take it, along with Mr. Brown, that the temples are a metaphor picturing the thoughts of our mind, thinking of all that Christ has done for us; and then relating that to our conscience, in terms of our having a sincere faith. Christ died for us to be able to have a clear conscience in all that we

would do for Him. The temples behind her veil refer to the believer's self-abasement and modesty; their having a humble and right view of themselves. These temples would include the cheeks of the Bride, which are described here for us as being like a piece of pomegranate. A piece of pomegranate is pink and white in color, just like a woman's cheeks when she is blushing. Sometimes because our walk with Christ is not as close as it should be, we have reason to blush. At other times, we would do spiritual work for Him and find that unbelievers oppose it. In both cases we must come to have a tender and clear conscience if we would be a strong and confident believer. Let's put this together with a few verses from the New Testament.

Turn with me over to Acts 24, verse 10. Paul has been falsely accused of trying to start a riot among the people, when he had only come up to the temple in Jerusalem to show his sincerity about his keeping the law and walking orderly. People had been informed about Paul that he taught all the Jews who were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor walk according to the customs. (Acts 21: 21) So Paul was in the temple, showing his sincere intentions along with four men under a vow, and some Jews from Asia seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him. (Acts 21: 27) This started a near riot and Paul ended up being apprehended by some soldiers and centurions, and this led to a public testimony. He preached to the mob his testimony but when he told them that God had told him that his ministry was going to be to the Gentiles, they almost started another riot. (Acts 22: 22) Paul ended up being apprehended and brought before the Council the next day and he spoke to them about the hope of the resurrection, but part of them being Pharisees and part Sadducees, there was dissension created there as well. Five days later this led to Paul's coming before Ananias the high priest and his accusing Paul before the governor Felix, using an orator named Tertullus. They presented false evidence that Paul had profaned the temple. Here was Paul's defense in Acts 24: 10. "Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak answered: Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship." "And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city." "Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me." "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets." "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men."

Now, this is a militant love for Christ. A Christian is a modest person when they are walking in the Spirit. They will try, like the Apostle Paul did, in every way to live their life sincerely before God and men; trying to have a conscience which is void of offense to God and to men; and in that order. This is a very pleasing and attractive thing to Christ. My friends, you should realize that as you live your life out sincerely, as a Christian, that many people may misunderstand you, and they may even not like you. They may even persecute you. Your strength will be found in your keeping a clear conscience and a close relationship with your Lord. Christ had led the Apostle Paul very deliberately through this strange and unusual series of events because He wanted Paul to be His preacher, and to be a witness for Him. In fact in Acts 23: 11, after he was first arrested, the Lord stood by him that night and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." You and I need to see how important a thing it is that we keep a clear conscience in relation to God; keeping His commandments, and in relation to men; to be a good witness of Christ before them. That is a beautiful thing to our heavenly Bridegroom Christ. Our temples are like a piece of pomegranate when our conscience is clear and when we seek to serve Him in

that way. When our conscience is clear, we can ask whatever we will and it will be done for us. Listen to 1 John 3: 18 – “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” “And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.” “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.” “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God, and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

Now this leads us to the metaphor of the neck of the Bride. (Verse 4)

“Your neck is like the tower of David, built for an armory, on which hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.” The neck is that part of the body which connects the head to all the rest of the body. If the neck is weak the head hangs down. If the neck is strong the head is held up. When faith is weak, Christ’s kingdom and cause of truth and righteousness cannot be defended, maintained, or advanced. But when faith is strong, His kingdom is promoted in every way. Our head is held high. Our boast is in the Lord. In the individual believer, spiritually speaking, the neck must refer to the grace of faith, as it is in exercise, in relationship to the spiritual warfare which the Church is involved in, in all generations, in the Church age. Faith unites us to Christ. Our best spiritual offense in spiritual warfare will be done by faith. And the best defense of our own soul against all spiritual enemies, and our defending of the cause of Christ will be done by faith. The bucklers which are mentioned here are small shields. There are a thousand of them mentioned in the text. This means that faith will be needed by every Christian, and that on many occasions. If you would be a mighty man in God’s spiritual Israel, your faith will need to be built into a strong tower. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it, and are safe.”(Proverbs 18: 10) The neck of the Christ’s Bride the Church is pictured for us here like the tower of David, and it is built for an armory. Jeremiah as the prophet of the Lord is mentioned in Jeremiah 6: 27 in this way, by God. “I have set you as an assayer and a fortress among My people, that you may know and test their way.” The King James Version states – “I have set you as a tower and a fortress among My people, that you may know and test their way.” In this case, Jeremiah was called to a people who were stubborn rebels; people who walked as slanderers, and not as people of faith. When you walk by faith, dear friend, you will find that you will not have to be always criticizing people around you; people who try to tell you what the word of the Lord is saying you should do. Your strength will be in the name of the Lord, and He will make you a tower of strength to others if you will walk with Him by faith in the truth of the Bible.

But you need to understand also, how necessary it will be for you, as a Christian, to take up the shield of faith. Turn with me to Ephesians Chapter 6, verse 10. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” You and I, as the Church of Jesus Christ, are in a spiritual battle. Oh yes, it is true, that Jesus has won the war for your soul’s salvation. But you and I are in a warfare to advance His kingdom of truth and meekness, and righteousness. And our warfare is not against people per se. It is not against flesh and blood. It is against spiritual forces in the heavenly places. We are called to stand against these forces. We can only stand against the devil’s schemes by taking up the “panoply”, the whole armor of God. This armor has many pieces which the Apostle goes on to mention. And we do not have time to look into all of them. But notice verse 16. “Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” The devil is a spiritual dart thrower. He is called “the accuser of the brethren.” He is

described as “accusing them day and night” in Revelation 12: 10. In verse 11 it tells us how the saints overcome him. “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Now it takes faith to do all of these things. Your faith must be in exercise concerning the blood of Christ being applied to the best of your works, and the worst of your sins. Only your faith can apply the blood. The blood of the Passover lamb saved the ancient Israelites when they came out of Egypt and when Pharaoh’s first-born and the first-born of all the Egyptians died. But they had to apply it to the door posts and the lintels or it would not have availed to save them from the death angel. So too, you have to apply the blood of Christ to all of your work for Christ, and all the sins of your heart and life to gain the victory over Satan. He can accuse all he wants, but you will overcome him by the blood of the Lamb. So, too, you must exercise faith in the word of the testimony; faith in the Bible as the Word of God. By faith in God’s precious word and His promises the truth can be spoken in the face of great oppositions. Truth may be suppressed for a short time or a long time, but faith will hold it fast and hold it forth, out of love to Christ and love to see others saved. Faith works by means of love, and it will lay down its life for Christ and His friends if necessary.

And this leads us to our final metaphor – The breasts of Christ’s Bride, the Church.
(Verse 5)

“Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies.” The breasts of the Church are here spoken of as being two fawns; two small twins of a gazelle. The gazelle is a very speedy, (I might say “racy”) and beautiful deer. And the longings of deer are mentioned in Scripture are a picture of the longing love which the believer has for Christ. Psalm 42, verse 1 - “As the deer pants, or longs for, the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God.” “My soul thirsts for the living God.” These 2 breasts of the Church are a picture of the developing love of the believer for Christ; the longing to be spiritually satisfied by Christ and to give themselves to Christ, in service to Him . Many of the commentators mention the breasts as being those which feed the Church the milk of the word. This is surely so in other contexts. But the context here is not motherly love. In this particular Scriptural context, the breasts of the Church are attractive to Christ in the sense of their marital love to each other. Jesus said to His Church, before He went to the cross in John 15: 9, “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” So the two breasts of the Church, I believe, represent the believer’s lovingly giving of themselves in spiritual love to Christ by keeping the two greatest commandments which He has given to His Church; to love God with all of their heart, and to love their neighbor as themselves. Or it could be put as the Apostle John puts it in 1 John 3: 23 – “And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.” Faith and love are twin graces. They feed on the fellowship of the saints; they feed among the lilies. These are the breasts which satisfy Christ in the ultimate spiritual sense, just as a man and a woman, in bonds of holy matrimony, are satisfied in their conjugal love for one another. Proverbs Chapter 5, verse 18 says, “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth, as a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love.” Let me close with the words of Frances Ridley Havergal the hymn-writer: “Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee.” “Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise.” “Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.” “Take my feet, and let them be, swift and beautiful for Thee.” (Swift and beautiful to serve Christ and to keep His commandments; like the gazelle.) This is the love language of Christ.