

**Song of Solomon 1: 14; "A Cluster of Camphire", Sermon # 15 in the series - "I am my Beloved's", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 20th, 2009, In the Afternoon Worship Service.**

What does Christ mean to you? That is what these verses are picturing for us. For it is the Bride of Christ who is saying these things of her beloved; the one whom she loves with an exclusive love; with a special and particular love; with a love that cannot stop thinking of all that He means to her. We saw in the last sermon that she described her beloved as a bundle of Myrrh that lay all night between her breasts. And I said to you that all the blessings of grace; all the blessings of salvation, are found in Christ. They are; as it were, bound up in this bag which is pictured for us spiritually, as being hung around the neck of the Bride of Christ, the Church. Every believer who is spiritually-minded remembers the fragrance of Christ's blessings and they bundle them up in a bag which is hung around their neck, spiritually speaking. All this that Christ has done for His Church; bringing her out of her sinful state and into a right relationship with God; meriting her favor and acceptance with God; all this was accomplished because He gave up His life for her; this she remembers. The many blessings of salvation which He purchased for her, by the holiness of His life which He lived unto God on her behalf, and then loving her unto death as a sinless sacrifice and substitute for her sins; this every believer remembers, and they hold it close to their heart.

The Bride also describes her beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ, in a further way in verse 14; the description is; that He is unto her, a cluster of henna flowers in the vineyards of EnGedi. In the King James it is worded this way: "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of Camphire in the vineyards of EnGedi." Henry Ainsworth in his Annotations says that, "Camphire is a sweet gum which comes from a tree; but cypress is a tree very much like it; whose fruit grows in clusters, and it also is sweet. The Hebrew Name copher (from which caphura or Camphire, as also the cypress tree, seems to be derived) usually signifies atonement, propitiation, or redemption." "According to which interpretation, the Holy Spirit here may have reference to the work and fruit of Christ's death, whereby he became "a cluster of redemption" unto his church, being "a propitiation for the sins of the whole world," (1 John ii. 2), the sweetness whereof is resembled by a cluster, (which is of many berries compact together), of the sweet cypress, for that "his blood cleanses us from all sin," (1 John 1: 7) and is accompanied with all other graces." So what we want to do this afternoon is to look at the Lord Jesus Christ as the "cluster of redemption" to His people. He is a tree of life to all who believe in Him for salvation. He is the atonement; "He is the propitiation for our sins; He is the satisfaction of God's righteous justice against sin, and He is the end of the law of righteousness for everyone who believes; He is the wrath-removing sacrifice for our sins; and oh, how sweet and sustaining is this thought to our souls. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only; but also for the whole World." (1 John 2: 2) I want us to be able to draw all that we can, in the time that we have, from this wonderful term, "A cluster of Camphire", and so

we will look at several of its possible meanings, first of all, and then conclude with a brief examination of the fields of Engedi. I hope that your mind will stay alert and that you will accompany me on this tour through the field of God's word, and that you will come to see the fullness of blessing that there is in our Lord Jesus Christ.

**First of all - Let me give you several of possible meanings of this word Camphire.**

John Gill says that this word "is by the Septuagint, rendered Cyprus, by which is meant either the island so called, of which read in Acts 11: 19 and 20 and 27: 4." "And then we must understand by it, a cluster of Cyprus, a cluster of the grapes of those vines which grew in Cyprus, which were the best and largest vines; as Pliny observes; and these being said to be the vineyards of Engedi mean either those vines that were brought from Cyprus, perhaps in Solomon's time, and planted in the vineyards of Engedi; or else, some of the best vines in the land of Canaan, which were much like to those in Cyprus: The land of Canaan was very fruitful of vines, and some of the best sort, which bore very large clusters..." I want you to turn with me to Numbers Chapter 13, verse 23. Moses has sent out 12 men to spy out Canaan, the land of Promise, and it says, "Then they came to the Valley of Eschol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole." "They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs." "The place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there." The reason that I have turned you to this passage is that this place which they called Eshcol; the word in the Hebrew in our passage here in Song of Solomon which is rendered "cluster", is the word Eschol. In the marginal rendering in Numbers 13: 23 it states that it is literally so. "The Valley of Cluster." In coming into the Promised land, to spy it out, the spies brought back this cluster of grapes as a sample of the fruit of the land. The land of Promise having this size of a cluster of grapes, is a picture of the greatness of the salvation that you and I who believe in Christ have every reason to investigate. From Christ comes all of our spiritual life, and all of our spiritual fruit. Now, the Lord Jesus and the Father of glory knew that because of Adam's sin in the garden of Eden, in the beginning, that no man or woman by nature can have spiritual life in themselves. They are fallen from their original righteousness and there is sinful corruption throughout their whole nature. No person, now, can bear good spiritual fruit unless they are planted in the good soil of the grace of the Lord Jesus. That is why Jesus said in Matthew 7, verse 15, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." "You will know them by their fruits." "Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?" "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit." "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit." The Lord Jesus knew that He would have to become the cluster of Cyprus, the cluster of grapes; the cluster of Camphire to our souls; or we would never be able to have eternal life, or bear good fruit unto God in holiness. And so He did a very amazing thing.

Turn with me to Genesis 49, verse 8. Here we have Jacob giving to his sons, a prophecy of the Messiah, the Promised Savior and Deliverer, coming from the tribe of Judah. "Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you." "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey my son, you have gone up." "He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?" "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people." "Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes." "His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk." So Christ is here compared to a lion coming back from going up to the prey. Jesus, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, went up to the cross of Calvary to make a prey of our sins. He had to be very bold and very brave to do this work; binding His donkey to the vine and His donkey's colt to the choice vine." This is referring to His resolute purpose to go up to Jerusalem and to die for our sins; to ride the colt, the foal of a donkey into Jerusalem. He would be our Shiloh. He would be our prosperous Savior; He would be the one to bring us peace and rest. For that is what the word Shiloh means. His death on the cross would become our life; his resurrection life in us would prove to be a cluster of grapes, which would grow in the vineyard of our hearts. For He "washed His garments in the wine, and His clothes in the blood of the grapes." He trod the winepress of the wrath of God, and no man was with Him there. "His eyes were darker than wine; not that He would be in any way intemperate, but rather that His eyes would sparkle with the joy and the pleasure of knowing that He, by His sufferings, would purchase the cluster of Camphire; the redemption of the souls of all of God's Elect. He said to His disciples in John 15: 4 - "Abide in Me, and I in you." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." "I am the vine, you are the branches." "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

Let us take Christ to ourselves as the cluster of Cypress and Camphire that He is. He is a cluster of divine and human perfections. Turn with me to the book of Colossians, Chapter 2 and verse 8 and you will see this. "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the World, and not according to Christ." "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." This distinguished guest resides as a cluster of Camphire in your heart. As God He is eternal, unchangeable, all-knowing, everywhere present, and has all power and authority in heaven and earth. Can he not be your helper and your strength and your encouragement in all of your attempts to obey His commandments by faith, as a believer in Him? He certainly can. As a perfect man He has a nature like yours, yet without sin; He can sympathize with your weaknesses. He can grant you grace, mercy, peace, and rest in relation to repenting of all of your sins, and being with you in all your attempts to do His good and perfect

will. It says in Colossians 2, verse 3, that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so that if you will "incline your ear to Him for wisdom, if you apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you will cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek for wisdom (Christ) as for silver, and search for her (personified in Him) as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2: 2-5) In Christ is seen and is found the "manifold wisdom of God"; the cluster of Camphire which comes to fill the believer's soul with the powerful fragrance of His love in going to the cross, and the beneficial life-changing effects of the Holy Spirit's presence and influences. The Holy Spirit leads every believer to be enraptured with Christ and with becoming holy even as He is holy. Dear believer, I hope that you will know more and more the reality of this cluster of blessings; Christ's life in your life; filling you with love; filling you with wisdom; filling you up with all the fullness of His grace and blessing so that you really do have your mind set on the things above where Christ is; and yet you really do have your heart also set on pleasing Him here upon the earth by your doing good works and serving Him as you can, because He is with you.

John Gill says this about the flowering aspects of the Cyprus tree. "By Cyprus is meant the Cyprus tree which grew upon the banks of the Nile, and at Ascalon in Judea, and very probably in the vineyards of Engedi, here mentioned as it did also in the island of Cyprus, from whence perhaps, it had its name." "The word Copher is used in the Mishnah and translated Cyprus; and Maimon and Bartenora say, it is the same which in Arabic is called the Alhenna, (The Henna plant) and refer to this place; and observe, that there are some that say it is the spice called the clove." "Of the Alhenna, Dr. Shaw says, "This beautiful and odoriferous plant, if it is not annually cut and kept low, grows ten or twelve feet high, putting out its little flowers in clusters, which yield a most grateful smell, like Camphire." "There seems to have been a likeness between the Cyprus-tree and vine, especially in their flowering; and it is said to bear a flowery fruit like a grape in flower..." Gill goes on to say, "The flower of this Cypress-tree which may be chiefly designed is of a white color, and a sweet smell; and may denote the purity of Christ's nature, and the innocence and holiness of His life, who in both appeared to be holy, harmless, and undefiled." "My beloved is to me a cluster of Henna blooms in the vineyards of EnGedi." Let me try to convince you today that holiness in our hearts is something which as a plant grows up and it produces clusters of virtue in our lives. It produces many good thoughts and many good words, which can lead to many good actions which will bring glory to God. Clusters of prayers blossom forth from our hearts. These Henna flowers are seen by our Father in heaven and are a delight to Him. "The prayer of the upright is His delight." Clusters of the fruit of the Spirit come forth in our speech and our actions, and grace is seen at work in our lives because of the love of Christ is being shown towards us; that love which has been poured out within our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Love, Joy, Peace, and Patience come flowering forth in a believer's life only because of the grace of Christ working secretly, working silently, giving life to one who is trusting in Him. Kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and Self-control are

the Henna Flowers that others see us holding in our hands spiritually as a bouquet because we saw them first in the love of our Beloved toward us, and we have learned from Him. "We love, because He first loved us." (1 John 4: 19) May each of us pray to be filled with all the fullness of Christ in this way of manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in good works for God and good deeds toward other people.

**Now 2ndly - I want to briefly turn our attention to the fields of Engedi.**

John Brown in his Dictionary says, "Engedi or EnGaddi otherwise called, Hazazon-Tamar, because of the multitude of palm-trees around." "It lay about 37 and a half miles south-east of Jerusalem; south of Jericho, between which and it, was a delightful valley ; and near the north-west shore of the Dead sea ; though others place it near the south-west." "It abounded with excellent vineyards, where grew gopher *trees*, (kopher in the Hebrew), and palm-trees." (Song of Solomon 1: 14) You might recall that I said to you in the sermon on verse 13 that these fields of Engedi are thought to be in the valley of Achor which is mentioned in Hosea 2: 15. I want you to turn with me there as we close this sermon. Verse 14 says, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her." "I will give her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt." "And it shall be, in that day, says the Lord, that you will call Me My Husband, and no longer call Me My Master." "For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered no more." Jeremiah Burroughs says in his commentary on Hosea that, "Achor was a very pleasant and fruitful valley, near Jericho; the first place that Israel came to when entering upon and taking possession of the land of Canaan." Let me see now if I can tie these things together.

I have tried to show you in this sermon just how great and many and precious are the blessings of our salvation which Christ purchased for us on the cross. They are a cluster of Camphire. He has reconciled us to God; He has taken away our reproach in the sight of the Holy God. He has brought us near to Him, and He has made us glad and will make us fruitful if we abide in Him. He has given us spiritual fields to work in, and to bring forth fruit to Him. The way that he has done all this is mentioned here for us in verse 14. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her, and give her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope." Israel had sought for other lovers besides God and Christ in the Promise of Redemption. And you would think that God would completely have cast them off forever with no promise of blessing for any of them. But He did not. Israel, herself, would find it hard to believe that God could love her again and take her to Himself again, and remarry her after her spiritual adulteries. He says, "Therefore I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness." Sometimes sinners of all kinds find it hard to believe that God could love them after the abominable sins that they have committed. Sometimes Christians find it hard to believe that Christ loves them so much that He will out-bid all of their other lovers and marry them to Himself. Listen to what Jeremiah Burroughs says about this. "

What God means by alluring His people, when once He is reconciled to them, may be expressed in these three things. First, I will unfold the beauty and excellency of the infiniteness of My goodness and loving-kindness, and set in array before their souls the exceeding glory of the riches of my grace. Secondly, Whereas before they went a whoring from Me, because their hearts were allured by their lovers, proffering unto them various contentments, and so subtly beguiling their minds ; I will now deal with them in a more powerful manner than their lovers possibly could, and outbid them all. Did their lovers proffer to them comfort? I will bid more than they. Did their lovers proffer gain ? I will bid more gain. Did they proffer more honor and respect ? I will outbid them in this too: so that I will persuade their hearts that they shall enjoy more in Me, than they possibly could in all that their lovers could do for them. And indeed, then the gospel has the true, full, and gracious work upon the heart of a sinner; when it yields to its proffers, as finding that all that the world can bid is now outbidden, and that there is more gain in Christ than in all else besides. You know, when one comes to offer so much for a commodity, and another outbids him, he carries it away: so when the world and sin proffer to the soul such and such contents, if God come and outbid all, the bargain is made up, and God carries away the heart." I hope, dear believer, that you will now see how great is the love of Jesus Christ for you. He is a cluster of Camphire to your soul. He is your life and strength and comfort and refreshment. Truly the word in the Original for Camphire rightly means, "an atonement": the man who propitiates all things. He has bought us with His precious blood. His love for His beloved truly goes beyond understanding.