

Song of Solomon 1: 15; "Behold you are Fair, my Love!" ,Sermon # 16 in the series - "I am My Beloved's", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 11th, 2009, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

If you are a married person it is extremely important to the strength of your marriage that you express your love to your spouse more than just occasionally. You have probably heard the story of the wife who complained to her husband that he never told her that he loved her. His response? Well, he said, "I told you that I loved you when I married you." "Wasn't that enough?" Well, no, that wasn't enough for her. I hope that you know that your spouse needs to know that your love is present for them now; being shown to him or her now; that it is for them, and toward them now; and not just that you told them once at a certain point many years ago. Love, if it exists, thrives on present expression. The love between a husband and a wife needs to be expressed every day and every night in words and actions which describe the reality of what your mind is thinking and what your heart is feeling. Similarly, if you love your spouse you will also try to express your love for them in ways which describe what you love about them. There is beauty in the soul, even if the beauty of the body will fade as time goes by. You tell your spouse that you love them, but why do you love them? There are specific things about them that you love. You should declare these things to them, and don't just think of them, occasionally, in your own mind and never say anything. Good and loving words are very important to the strength of your marriage. Similarly words are very important to the strength of your spiritual relationship of marriage to Jesus Christ. The words of Christ come to us with power from this text; and so it will not take but a few of His words to ravish your heart, if your heart is tender toward Him. Here, we have only 6 words which are given to us in the first phrase of verse 15, which are the expression of the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ toward His Bride the Church. "Behold, you are fair, my love!" And four of these words are repeated for us again in the second phrase. "Behold, you are fair!" And then in the third phrase there is a further more specific declaration of what our Lord admires when He looks at His Bride, His Church - She has Dove's Eyes. And so what we want to think about this afternoon is how the Lord speaks to His Bride about the beauty that He sees when He looks at her. We want to try to understand what He means when He says that she is fair. We want to try to understand why He repeats that same statement twice. And then finally we will explore His statement to her that she has Dove's Eyes. The Lord would have you, oh believer, to know how highly He thinks about you, so that your faith would be strengthened here today.

1st of all - We want to try to understand what Christ means when He says to His Bride that she is fair.

"Behold" is the first word that He uses in the phrase. He is saying, "Look at this". "Look at it carefully and see how it is that I see you My Church, My Companion, My Friend," says Christ. "You see yourself as black and as having no good thing in you, and that you are worn and weary and old before your time

because of trials, difficulties, and persecutions. "I see you as fair." "I see you as comely." "I see you as beautiful." Our Lord sees us who believe in Him, in a way that we do not see ourselves. And He knows that sometimes we cannot see ourselves rightly without His words of assurance. A husband and wife need kind and loving words coming from one another in order that they may continue on strong; to love and serve each other; strong and loving to serve their God. Christ sees every believer who is spiritually united to Himself, as fair. A believer, if they are truly spiritually minded tends to see themselves as falling short of God's glory and His expectation of them. They tend to fix their eyes upon the corruptions of their heart that they see in themselves, rather than thinking about what Christ has done for them and in them. But as Thomas Robinson says, "Believers are never fairer in Christ's eyes than when blackest in their own, and when they are meekly enduring the contempt of others." Christ is delighting in them, even when they cannot take delight at looking at their own heart and their own life. His love "delights in expressing His high esteem for them and His admiration of them." "Christ does not look at their blemishes, but rather at the beauties of His people." The beauty He knows, comes from Him and His grace at work in their heart and life. The blemishes are their own. "But Christ is the best judge of beauty." Turn with me to Numbers Chapter 23, and verse 19, and perhaps this will help us to understand. Balak, the king of Moab, has been trying to hire Balaam the prophet to curse Israel for him. He has been having a very hard time convincing him that he should do so. And why? Listen to verse 19, to what Balaam says. "God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent." "Has He said, and will He not do?" "Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" "Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it." "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel." "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them." This is truly a very precious passage of Scripture. The children of Israel, if you will remember, were not a very obedient or faithful people to the One who had redeemed them out the house of bondage, and as they had come up out of Egypt. God had sent plagues upon Egypt, He had parted the Red Sea and brought the children of Israel through on dry ground, but destroyed the Egyptian army when they attempted to go through. He led them out and provided for their needs in the Wilderness. But they, in actuality, really did fall far short of what God expected them to be and to do, in terms of trusting in Him and obeying His commandments. And yet, because God had promised that He would bring them out of Egypt and into the Promised land, flowing with milk and honey, He would indeed do it. And when their enemy Moab wanted to see Balaam curse them, instead He blessed them. Why? Because God, in His faithfulness could not go back on what He had promised, and what He had said that He would complete, in terms of their being brought out of bondage and into the blessings of the Promised Land. When He looked at Israel, He simply did not see their iniquity. He did not see the guilt of their sin. He did not see their wickedness. What was wrong with God? Was He blind? No, He was looking very

carefully, and when He looked He saw what Christ would do for them so many years later on the cross. This was the basis of all the mercy that was shown to them then, and it will be the basis of all the mercy that He will yet show to them in the future, in a coming day in their national conversion. He saw them in accordance with His own purpose and working of grace as fair. This is also how He looks at you, O believer. He looks, for Christ's sake, and He sees you as fair. You may have committed many great and grievous sins in the past, but for Christ's sake He forgave them all, when you trusted in Him. You may still have, what appears to you, great remaining corruptions in your heart which no one else can see, but Christ's sees you giving these over, and giving these up to Him, so that He can cleanse you from every spot and from every stain of sin in your heart. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!" "And such we are," by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He sees His Bride as lovely when He knows that there are many things, strictly speaking, that need to change in her. He will give her grace to change; to be more righteous and holy. He will give her grace to be lovely. Numbers 24: 5 says, "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!" "Your dwellings, O Israel!" All the true churches of Jesus Christ; those who will hold fast and hold forth His word, are lovely to Him. Thomas Robinson says, "Christ looks not only at what believers are now, but at what they shall be hereafter." "He views them past, present, and future at one glance." "Christ takes delight in His people's beauty." And I would say that the same is true of His whole group of Elect believers, His Bride the Church. He views her throughout all generations as one group; as one magnificent and beautiful woman that He loves and that He died for. "Behold, you are fair, my love!"

Now Secondly - Let us ask ourselves why the Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, repeats this phrase a second time; "Behold, you are fair".

He repeats it because He really means it; and because it might seem too good to be true to her. "Oh, your just saying that!", she says to Him, "but really You know better". It reminds me of that verse in 1st John 4: 16. I like the way that it is rendered in the New American Standard Bible. "And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us." We know of His love in Jesus Christ our Lord, but it seems to be another step to believe in that love. How can He love such a great sinner as I am? Well, Christ can do it, and the Father can do it, and the Holy Spirit can show us love because of what the Lord Jesus did at the cross. God's holy justice was not suspended because Christ went to the cross; it was fulfilled in Him; both in terms of punishment for our sins, and righteousness in terms of our obedience. Our obedience, even as we go about to live the Christian life and keep God's commandments, is incomplete and deficient at many points. What makes up for this in the sight of our just and holy God? Christ's obedience in His righteous life which is imputed to our works as well as to our persons. Christ has worked out a righteousness apart from what we try to do to keep God's law, and that righteousness is imputed to us when we believe, and we are seen by God

as complete in Christ and accepted in the Beloved all during our earthly pilgrimage for Christ's sake.

Turn with me to Ephesians Chapter 1, verse 3. Here we find it explained a little more. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved." There it is; we are accepted in the Beloved. Truly this is love to be believed. But sometimes we hesitate to believe. Don't hesitate. Our sinful persons, if we are repenting of our sins, and all of the good works that we will do after we are converted to Christ; all of this is "accepted in the Beloved". Otherwise they would not be accepted, if we and our works were not in Christ." All of our works must be seen as having been wrought in God, and more specifically in Christ; believing in Him as we do them. Christ sees you as fair on the outside because of His imputed righteousness which He skillfully worked out in doing what was right and good at every point on her behalf. He sees you as fair on the inside because He lovingly laid down His life for you at the cross so that you would receive a New birth and New Heart; so that you could die to sin and live to righteousness. This is why the Apostle Paul words it the way that he does in Philippians 3, verse 7, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." This is truly magnificent love. Paul says that he suffered the loss of all things to attain to a better understanding of the reality of it. He was not striving to establish his own righteousness in the sight of the holy God. He was striving to better understand Christ's righteousness, imputed to him, and the grace which was at work in his soul. Grace so that he could have greater fellowship with Christ. Grace that would enable him to suffer for Christ. Grace that would establish and maintain that love relationship between his soul and Christ's. O what should be the response of the believer to such grace as they have received? Psalm 149, verse 1 - "Praise the Lord!" "Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of saints." "Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." "Let them praise His name with the dance; let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp." "For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation." "Behold, you are fair, my love!" "Behold, you are fair!"

Then thirdly - In the third phrase of verse 15 there is a more specific declaration of what our Lord admires when He looks at His Bride, His Church - She has Dove's Eyes.

What does our heavenly Bridegroom mean by this? You have dove's eyes. The dove is the emblem of the Holy Spirit in the gospels. When the Lord Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, it says in Luke 3: 22, "And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.'" Because of this anointing, Jesus was given the fullness of the Spirit; the Spirit without measure. He would most certainly as a man have wisdom and power in His going about to do God's will, and to do good to other men. To have dove's eyes, therefore for a believer, would be for them to be filled with the Spirit, in such a way, that the way that he or she looks at life and other people is decidedly affected by Christ's example, and His grace working within them. They will, by the attitude of the eyes of their heart, and even by the look on their face, evidence the wisdom that has been given to them in the Scripture, and the wisdom and grace that have come to them by the Holy Spirit's work in their heart and life. I have often noticed in the look of the eyes of many of the Puritan divines, in the pictures that I have seen of them; the look of the Dove. At least that is how I would term it. To have Dove's eyes is to be a knowing person; a person in the know; a person who knows the meaning of life, and a person who is trying to wisely live out the truth of the Bible. A true believer in Jesus Christ will reflect that true knowledge, wisdom, and gentleness of Christ which have been shown to them, and given to them. Ecclesiastes 9, verse 1 says, "Who is like a wise man?" "And who know the interpretation of a thing?" "A man's wisdom makes his face to shine, and the sternness of his face is changed." So also his eyes, then which are the most noticeable and prominent part of his face.

The Dove is also an emblem of the peace and blessing of assurance that came to Noah who stayed in the ark for a whole year while the floodwaters of God's wrath inundated the earth and all flesh perished except Noah and his family. When Noah neared the end of his journey on the ark, he sent forth a dove to see whether the flood-waters had receded from the face of the ground. She returned to him that first time he sent her out. They he sent out the dove again after 7 days and she came back with a freshly plucked olive leaf in her mouth. And then he sent her out the 3rd time, after another seven days, and she did not return to him again anymore. To have dove's eyes is to have the assurance which comes from God that you will not only not be judged by God for your sins, but that you understand that a new life and a new world has opened up to you, now that you have believed in Christ and are married to Him spiritually. New things of righteousness and truth are growing there in your heart, and your eyes reflect that. You are not always sad and discouraged because of the remainders of sin which are still present in your heart, because you know that the Lord is there too, doing His precious and magnificent work which will continue forever in your heart and in your life. You know that God is faithful, and He who has begun a good work will

perfect until the day of Jesus Christ; the Day that you see him face to face. This is why you have Dove's eyes. You have that assurance and it shows in the way that you live, and the way that you look at things. The Lord Jesus says in Matthew 10: 16, "Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves." "Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless (or innocent) as doves. A Christian's character is reflected in his or her eyes. As Thomas Robinson says, "The eyes of believers are not those of the tiger, or the fox, or the hawk; but their eyes are the eyes of a dove." In other words their eyes reflect the wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, and gentle; willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." Their eyes communicate all of those blessed and wonderful things that Christ's grace has produced in their heart. Each of us here who believes in Christ and who looks humbly to Him for grace each and every day, will come to have this look about him. They will have Dove's eyes. "Who is wise and understanding among us?" "Let them show by good conduct that their works are done in the meekness of wisdom." (James 3: 13) But let it also be shining forth from their eyes.