

# The Winds of the Spirit

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[ 0 : 00 ] If we could, for a short time this morning, turn back to the chapter that we read together in the Song of Solomon, chapter 4. I'd like us to take for our text this morning the words that we find in verse 16.

Song of Solomon, chapter 4, verse 16. Awake, O north wind, come thou south. Blow upon my garden that the spices thereof might flow out.

Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits. Now, the Song of Solomon is very much a book that uses the language of love in order to stir up the affections of the Lord's people. It's a book that points us to have that yearning for a taste of his love and for us to have, as we read in chapter 1, verse 8, something that is better than wine.

Now, you'll have noticed as we read through the chapter there that this book uses the language of physical beauty to express the mutual delight that Christ and the believer have in one another.

[ 1 : 40 ] John Owen, when describing the Song of Solomon, said that the matter of it is totally sublime. It's spiritual and it's mystical.

You see, this is a book that is bursting with rich allegorical imagery of the most beautiful relationship that there is. It's the relationship of Christ and his people, the church.

Sadly, many modern commentators have reduced the picture that we have here to a mere romantic love letter.

They say that this is nothing more than a letter from King Solomon to a bride whose name we know not. And that this is here to serve as an example of what a loving relationship between a husband and a wife should look like.

But, you know, for us to accept such a limited view of this book this morning is for us to have a completely wrong view of Scripture.

[ 2 : 54 ] You'll remember in Luke 24 when Christ met with the two on the road to Emmaus. We read in verse 27 of that chapter that, beginning with Moses and the prophets, he, that is Christ, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

And so there he is. From Genesis to Revelation, there we see Christ.

The book of Esther is perhaps a prime example of this. Not once in the book of Esther do we see the name of the Lord mentioned.

Yet we cannot say that the book of Esther is just a book about a girl who becomes a queen, a rags to riches story.

Because within the pages of the book of Esther there is so much more. We see there in that story that the hand of the Lord is so richly guiding providence, guiding providence in a way that would preserve the nation of Israel.

[ 4 : 16 ] And we know that, of course, this was necessary because in preserving the nation of Israel, from this would come the Messiah, the Christ.

And so it is with the Song of Solomon. Although he is perhaps not explicitly mentioned on these pages, Christ is no doubt found here before us.

Now the name Solomon means peace. And so the very title of the book, the Song of Solomon, from the outset, points us towards the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus.

It is a good start. And as well as this, in verse 1 of the chapter, the Song presents itself as the Song of Songs.

Literally, this means that it is the greatest of song or the most supreme of songs. Now while undoubtedly the Bible does have a high view of marriage, a high view of the relationship between a husband and a wife, I think we come into a problem when we conclude that the song here is merely about a romance, and that the greatest song is about the relationship that a man has with his wife.

[ 5 : 44 ] Because to rank this song as higher than a song about God's glory and God's redemptive love would be for us to completely miss the point.

Throughout Scripture we often see marriage as a metaphor for the love that Christ has for his people, for the union that he has with his people.

Now many examples could be given. Matthew 22, we read of Christ saying that the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a wedding feast.

While in Revelation 19 we read of the marriage supper of the Lamb, where the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready.

As well as this, throughout Scripture, throughout the New Testament, Christ often refers to himself as the bridegroom. You'll remember in Matthew 9, 15, while answering a question about fasting, Christ replies, Can the wedding guests, referring to his people, can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?

[ 7 : 04 ] And so friends, we're to understand the Song of Solomon in the context of Scripture as a whole. And in particular, in light of how we see the relationship of Christ with his people represented so richly in the pages of the New Testament.

And so with this in mind, let us turn to our text this morning, which we find in Song of Solomon 4, 16. Now wake, O north wind, come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices that of might flow out, that my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

Now here, the bride is asking for the wind to blow upon her garden. The wind here, of course, is talking about the wind of the Holy Spirit.

And the garden here is the garden of her soul. And we see that picture frequently throughout Scripture of the Spirit of the Lord being referred to as the wind.

Perhaps the one that we're most familiar with is there in John 3, 8, when Jesus, after telling Nicodemus that he must be born again, goes on to say that the wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound.

[ 8 : 35 ] But you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

We cannot see the wind as it howls around us, but we know it's there. I was reminded of this yesterday. Yesterday was a particularly blustery day up in Ness, and as I sat and as I looked out the window, I could see my mother's flowers, which had been so beautiful the day before, taking up, battering those flowers, where the heads of them were even taken off by the power of the wind. Now, I couldn't see the wind, but I could see its effects. I could see the power that was behind the wind. And so it is with the Holy Spirit.

We cannot see the Holy Spirit. We cannot physically touch the Holy Spirit. But isn't it true to say that we can so clearly see His power?

Now, at this point, and this is just a little aside, I said His power. And I said His power because it's important to always remember that the Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead.

[ 10 : 04 ] Friends, never refer to the Holy Spirit as It, because our God is not an It. Our God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we're always to refer to Him as He.

And so we can so clearly see that power of the Spirit when it begins working in the life of a sinner, when it takes a sinner from darkness to light, from death to life.

And you know, the shorter catechism tells us that this is what effectual calling is. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely as He has offered to us in the Gospel.

And so just like the power of the wind can very quickly change the landscape that is around us, I think we know that in this corner of the world more than most.

As quickly as the wind can change the landscape around us, so too it can change the landscape of our soul. Friends, I wonder, as you sit here this Sabbath morning, has He convicted you of your sin and misery?

[ 11 : 42 ] I wonder, has He enlightened your mind to the knowledge of Christ? I wonder, has He renewed your will?

Well, if it's so that He has done this, it will be evident not only to yourself, but to all who are around you, because 2 Corinthians 5.17 tells us that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, and all things have become new. But here in our text this morning, the Bride, the Church of Christ, she's already had the work of the Spirit carried out within her, reconciling her to Christ.

So why is it that she is asking for the wind of the Spirit to blow in the garden of her soul? Well, like any garden, this is a garden that needs continual upkeep.

This is a garden that is full of good things, it is full of fruit and spices. Yet in order for this garden to flourish and to remain as it is, in order for this garden to be as fruitful as it possibly can be, it needs to be nurtured, it needs to be cultivated.

[13:12] I'm sure we can all think of gardens that we once knew to be beautiful. Perhaps in our street or somebody in our family had a garden that we knew to be beautiful.

They had a perfectly manicured lawn. They had a flower bed without a weed in sight. But yet after the passage of time, for one reason or another, this garden began to fade.

This garden began to change. The weeds began to set in until, through time, this became a garden that was unrecognizable.

And you know, so it is with the garden of our soul. Although the Spirit has taken us from death to life, we're not to neglect our soul.

Because when the Spirit works savingly in us, when the Spirit, when the Lord sows that seed of regeneration in our hearts, there comes from that something that we have never had before.

[14:24] there comes the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5, 22, 23 reminds us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Friends, these are the graces that make up the fruit of the Spirit. This is the fruit that grows in the garden of the soul, in the garden of the believer, making it such an attractive place to be.

But yet, yet if we, as sinners, if we neglect to feed that garden, and if we neglect to tend to that garden as we ought to, these graces, these fruits, will soon find themselves hidden, being suffocated under, under the weeds of the world and the flesh and the devil.

And in doing so, they will make no progress. 1 Corinthians 3, 6 tells us that it is Paul that plants. It is Apollos that waters.

But it is God and God alone that gives the increase. And so, it is only the Holy Spirit that can give the increase in the garden of our soul.

[16:03] It is only the Holy Spirit that can maintain that garden so that it should be what it ought to be. And it is because of this that we see here before us this prayer from the bride to the bridegroom because this is an acknowledgement that she needs that spirit to blow upon her so that her fruit will be ripened and ready for good use.

Notice, it appears here that the bride is asking for two winds. Awake, O north wind, come thou south.

We know that there is, of course, only one Holy Spirit. And so, rather than asking for two spirits, the bride is here asking the one spirit to do two different things.

firstly, she says, Awake, O north wind. Notice the word, awake. This would indicate to us that perhaps the spirit is asleep.

But again, we know that this is not possible. Our God does not slumber and sleep as we do. What's been spoken of here is the very fact that the bride herself is asleep.

[17:37] And what needs awakened is her awareness of that Holy Spirit in her life. The word awake is often used in Scripture by the Lord's people when dealing with him.

We read in Isaiah 51, 9, Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord. Now the writer here is not suggesting that the Lord is weak, that he needs to put on strength, but rather that he himself needs to be awakened, to be enabled to put on the strength of the Lord.

And so what the believer is really asking here is that she will be awakened by the Spirit of the Lord. And isn't it true that at times we can almost be anesthetized towards the dealings of the Lord with us, that at times in our Christian experience we are so taken up with the things of time and of sense that we are not sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

This north wind was powerful. This was a powerful wind that could be cold and biting.

We read in Proverbs 25.3 that the north wind brings forth rain. This was a wind that caused the clouds to empty in order for the sky to clear.

[19:22] In Job 37.22 we read that fair weather comes out of the north. And so here we have the bride calling for all these clouds to be swept away so that the sky of her providence will be clear.

And isn't it true that many times we can have the darkest of clouds hovering over the garden of our soul.

The clouds of sinful humanity. Clouds that are overshadowing the graces that God has so mercifully planted in that garden.

Clouds that are covering these graces in a way that we can hardly see them in ourselves and those around us can hardly see them in us either.

These can be clouds friends that block the very sunlight that needs to give us growth.

[ 20 : 38 ] Friends if you are under such a cloud this morning perhaps you are be assured that they can be removed.

If you want these clouds to be removed they can be removed. The wind of the spirit is powerful enough to remove even the darkest clouds that are overshadowing our hearts.

And you know when these clouds do overshadow our hearts these clouds of pride and greed and greed or whatever else they are. It's not because the sun has disappeared.

The sun is always there. It's just that we can't see it. Isn't it so when we go up into the sky in a plane?

I've been flying a lot recently since I began my studies in Edinburgh. what I notice is when I fly up above the clouds right above the clouds the sun is shining so brightly and all you can see are blue skies into what seems like an endless horizon.

[ 21 : 56 ] But then as the plane begins to make its descent as it begins to land it comes down under the clouds and all of a sudden you feel that you're in a completely different place.

You're in a place that is grey and dark a place that looks so cold and bleak but yet the sun is still there.

It is just covered by those clouds and you know you might find yourself under a myriad of such clouds this morning that are separating you from having sweet fellowship with your Lord.

They may even be clouds of providence that are out with your control but you know yet behind every single cloud every single one is the sun.

Not that yellow ball of fire that is in the sky but behind every single cloud is the sun of righteousness the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 23 : 08 ] of course the darkest cloud of all and this is solemn the darkest cloud of all is the cloud of unrepented sin the cloud of unbelief the cloud that has those words echoing around it I will not have this man to rule over me.

This is a cloud that left to itself will never lift. This is a cloud that will get darker and darker and heavier and heavier but yet a cloud that is nothing compared to the darkness that awaits the unbeliever for all eternity.

Are you sitting under that cloud this morning as you sit here in the seminary? Is it true that you have not even yet caught a glimpse of the life-giving light that comes from the sun of righteousness?

Whatever the dark influences are in your life this morning whether you are a Christian or not we are to go to the bridegroom. We might not yet know him as our own bridegroom but we are to go to him asking that the Holy Spirit may blow the north wind of conviction upon our soul.

This may indeed be uncomfortable. It may be cold and chilling yet it's so necessary. It's necessary to show us our need of him.

[ 25 : 02 ] This reminds me of a story that I'm sure most if not all of you are familiar with but yet a story that is worth revisiting. The story of the Highland Kitchen Maid.

This story goes that Minister Hector MacPhail of Rosales was making his way down to the General Assembly in Edinburgh and as he made his way down he stayed in an inn for the night and as was customary he at the end of the night before going to sleep he beckoned everyone who was in the inn to join him so that he could end the day in the best possible way by having worship.

And so as everyone gathered together there in that inn he said is everyone here? And the innkeeper said yes everyone is here except for the kitchen maid.

She will not be joining us. She is in no fit state to join us. And Hector said why is she in no fit state to join us?

And the innkeeper said because her clothes are ragged and dirty. We couldn't possibly invite her in here to have worship with us. the minister said go go and get her.

[ 26 : 30 ] And so he did. And she came in and she sat under the word as it was read and sung that night in worship. And afterwards she came up to Hector and she said I have never heard anything

like that in my life.

She had never heard the sweetness of the gospel. and it led her to ask questions in her own heart. And so before leaving the minister said to her will you promise me one thing?

Promise me that when you go to bed tonight that you will pray the prayer show me myself. And if you do this I promise that I will take to you a handkerchief from Edinburgh.

And so he went on his way and she accepted. She made the promise and she went to her bed. At the end of the general assembly as Mr. Macphail was making his way back up to Rissalus he again stopped at the inn only to find that there was no sign of the kitchen maid.

Where is the kitchen maid? He asked the innkeeper. The innkeeper said she's taken to her bed. She's been there for days and she's in a state of desperation.

[ 27 : 54 ] And so he went to see this kitchen maid and he said what is wrong? And she said I prayed that prayer and as soon as I prayed that prayer I was shown myself and what I saw was so ugly.

And the minister said to her I fear not. There is another prayer that you can pray. You can pray to the Lord that he will show you himself.

And so she prayed that prayer show me thyself. And many years later she caught up once again with the minister having found the Lord because as she prayed that prayer the Lord opened her eyes so that she was able to see him in all his beauty.

She had experienced the cold north wind to convict her to show her herself but it was so necessary. But then following that came something else came the second wind, the south wind, the soothing wind that was like balm to her soul, warm and pleasant, that wind of comfort.

Isn't our Lord gracious that he gives us the north and the south wind both equally necessary? And isn't it true that there's nothing more that gladdens our hearts as the Lord's people and experiencing this south wind blowing on the garden of our soul?

[ 29 : 51 ] And when it does so, we're able to see. Thomas Manton said, God's mind is revealed in scripture, but we cannot see anything without the spectacles of the Holy Spirit.

And so when this warm south wind blows upon our soul, isn't it true that we can see Christ even clearer than before? That these spectacles of the Holy Spirit, if you like, they magnify him in a way that we've never seen before, warming us to the very core of our being.

Don't you long for more of this? Don't you desire to instead of going through the motions of religion day after day after day, don't you desire to know what it is to have the warmth of the Spirit revealing to you Christ afresh?

And you know, it's that Spirit that makes fellowship with his people so sweet. It's that Spirit that makes his word like manna to our soul.

Friends, isn't it time that the Church of Christ, isn't it time that you and I with you, that we once again began to give the Holy Spirit his rightful place, depending on him and him alone.

[ 31 : 30 ] Not every gimmick of the day, but the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the things of Christ. But notice how the bride asks for both.

she asks for the north wind and she asks for the south wind. She doesn't care which wind blows upon the garden of her soul as long as it does blow.

And isn't it true to say that sometimes as the Lord's people we can feel that he isn't speaking to us at all, that he isn't hearing us at all.

He can seem so far from us. And you know, sometimes because of this we are just as thankful for the cold north wind, we're just as thankful for that word of rebuke as we are for that word of comfort. Scripture tells us that whom the Lord loves, he chastens. And so to experience the biting nip of that cold wind is surely a blessing to his people, a reminder to us that we are indeed children of God, that we are not illegitimate.

[ 32 : 54 ] The most fearful thing for us this morning is for us not to care either way, for us to be content going on through this wilderness journey with neither the north or the south wind blowing upon us, with no real interaction with our Lord and Saviour.

With such a state is usually due to the fact that our conscience has been seared, as it were, with a hot iron. We're unable to be aware of the promptings of the Spirit because we have numbed our conscience disobedient hearts.

And so friends, take heart this morning if you have this prayer, if you wish for the Lord to reveal himself to you in chastening or even in comfort because this surely is a sign of life, a sign that you

have that desire to have renewed communion with him.

And you know, when this happens, you will know. When this happens, those around you will know. Because when this wind of the Spirit blows upon the garden of our souls, we read in our text here that the spices will flow out.

The spices, of course, are referring to the graces in our heart, the fruit of the Spirit that we mentioned before, love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control.

[ 34 : 46 ] And in the same way that spices need to be worked at, they need to be beaten for the fragrance to come from them, so too do the graces in our hearts need to be worked at.

They need to be worked at before that fragrance of Christ will come in our walk and in our conversation. But we cannot work these graces ourselves.

Yes, we have a part to play, that is true. But before we try and work these graces ourselves, what we need to do is we need, like the bride here, to come to the bridegroom and ask the spirit to enable that fragrance of Christ to flow from us, to surround us as his bride so that we will have that sweet odour in our midst.

Do we have that this morning? Do we have it as his people? Or do we have the stale smell of the world surrounding us wherever we go?

There is, I live in a house that was once my grandparents, and outside the house there is a honeysuckle plant. This is a plant that has been there ever since I was a little boy.

[ 36 : 15 ] And from time to time as I pass this plant, the smell of it comes my way, if you like, and it reminds me of when I was young, and it brings me back in a strange way to my grandparents.

It's funny how smells can do that. You know, as the Lord's people, if we have that aroma surrounding us, it's true that it'll help our brothers and sisters in Christ, because they will smell it of us.

It will encourage them, and they will want to return again if they have drifted away. They will want to return again to their first love.

Friends, this fruit is not of benefit only to us, but to the church as a whole, as iron sharpens iron. And you know, we read of the greatest benefit of all in the last line, and with this I'm nearly finished. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.

[ 37 : 34 ] the bride here wants the groom, the bridegroom, to come into the garden.

I'm sure as you sit here this morning, there's nothing more that you want than for Christ to reveal himself to you, afresh in your soul.

And you know, he has promised that as his people, he will sup with us, and we will sup with him. Isn't that a wonderful promise?

But friends, we need to make sure that there is nothing in our hearts to stay that is keeping the Lord away. We are not to grieve the Holy Spirit.

We are not to quench the Spirit. Yes, we will always have sinful hearts, that is true. but we can add to this by our disobedience, and in doing so, we can truly miss that blessing of him coming in with us.

[ 38 : 44 ] And so, let us call upon that Spirit this morning. Let us call upon him to water the garden of our soul, so that truly and unashamedly, we may welcome our beloved in, that we may welcome him in to come and to eat his beloved fruits, so that he may truly be able to delight in us as his redeemed.

Unconverted friends, I wonder if you are aware of what is growing in the garden of your soul this morning.

Are you aware of the wilderness that is within? Are you aware of the thorns and the weeds and the thistles that are there stifling your heart, keeping Christ from coming in?

Well, dear friends, let me encourage you by saying this. You needn't stay another day in such a condition, because here in the gospel, here we have that divine gardener.

We have the one who is more than willing to plant the seed of his grace in your heart. He is more than willing to plant the seed of his mercy in your soul, so that it too will flourish into a garden fit for a king.

[ 40 : 32 ] Don't you want that? Because in getting it, the blood of Christ will cover all your sins, will cleanse you from all your sins, enabling you to enjoy life in another garden, the garden of the Lord in that celestial city for all eternity.

Awake, O Northwind, come thou south, blow upon my garden that the spices thereof might flow out.  
Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.

Friends, let it be so, for our good, but more importantly, for his glory. Amen, and we pray that the Lord will bless these few thoughts to us, and to his name be all the glory.

We can conclude now by singing to God's praise from Psalm 1, Psalm 1, and we can sing verses 1 to 3.

We can sing verses 1 to 3 to God's praise.■■■ great because I can see a year and a pack off the  
Thank you.

[ 42 : 53 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 45 : 23 ] Thank you. Thank you. Amen.