

THE IMPORTANCE OF BETROTHAL

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Transcription of recording, slightly edited

It is lovely to share with you today. I am going to continue on a theme that we have been meditating on in this season. It is betrothal as a process and a season prior to marriage but continues into marriage. This is the subject of betrothal. We have been hearing this in this season. I have titled this, 'The importance of betrothal'. I want to exhort you to this word that is proceeding to us, and to encourage you not to miss the season of this word. In one sense, this is a second time for us, as we are hearing this word. We are hearing that betrothal is to become the key focal point of a Christian courtship and of marriage reformation. During the season of Christian courtship towards marriage, the key focal point is to be betrothal; and likewise, for those who are married, the key focus of our marriage reformation is betrothal.

I am going to remind you today of points that we are hearing in this season. I really want to exhort you to be zealous for this word, which actually is a fruit of repentance, as we will see. As you are receiving this word in repentance and faith, the fruit of that is that you are zealous for this word to become a conversation of faith in your households; and to become a conversation of faith in your marriages; and to become a conversation of faith with the young people.

I will flag up front: for those who are single; or for those who are widows; or for those who are much younger - do not switch off. This word is talking to all of us because it is talking about the betrothal of Christ and the church, the bride of Christ. We are talking about marriage, but we are talking about the one marriage covenant that will continue into the new heavens and the new earth, which is the marriage of Christ and the church. Catch the key point up front: betrothal defines for us the nature of the bond between a man and a woman which is to become the covenant of their marriage, and it is also talking about the bond between

the church and Christ, and that is to be the substance of our marriage to Him. Young ones, do not switch off. This is a word for all of us. This is talking about the bride of Christ.

The Scriptures explain that betrothal is a season that precedes marriage and then continues into marriage. It is something prior to marriage, but it continues into marriage. The classic example for us is the betrothal of Joseph and Mary, who became the mother of Jesus. The Bible says that they were betrothed. To pick up how much the Scriptures honour this principle of betrothal, it says that they were husband and wife by betrothal. So, they were deemed to be husband and wife before they were married and before they had come together. Matthew chapter 1 verses 18 to 19: 'Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows; after His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they had come together... [before they were married] ... before they had come together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph, her husband... [I love that. Joseph (they are not married), but Joseph is her husband by betrothal.] ...Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly [which means to break their betrothal covenant].'

Let us catch the weight the Scriptures place on betrothal. It is a covenant (or an agreement) in relation to the nature of what your marriage is to become. It is so honoured in the Scriptures that you are deemed to be husband and wife by betrothal. This scriptural understanding of betrothal is fresh for us in this season. The scriptural understanding of betrothal is different from our familiar traditions, and it is different from the concept of engagement in Western society. Let us not just say that betrothal equals engagement. Actually, the picture that is portrayed to us in our society that an engagement means a man on bended knee

with a very expensive diamond ring, proposing to his fiancée-to-be, is the antithesis of betrothal because that is a trading engagement. It is, 'I am going to offer you everything you want in trade for you to be everything that I want.' Betrothal has nothing to do with that. Let us not confuse betrothal with our society's view on engagement.

In the Scriptures, betrothal is an agreement or a covenantal commitment. It is a commitment in relation to the covenant of marriage. What is the nature of our marriage covenant going to be? And I am committing myself to that. That is the betrothal agreement or covenant. It is towards a Christian marriage covenant and (as we have heard in this season), it is 'the Father's holy institution'. I will pick up a Scripture here. Ezekiel chapter 16 verse 8, picking up the point that betrothal is part of an agreement (or a contract) and a commitment. This is the Lord through the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel chapter 16 verse 8. 'When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love [meaning you are of marriageable age]; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. [Here is the point] Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine by betrothal.' Betrothal is a commitment (or a covenant); and the Lord is saying that it is an 'oath'. He is actually making an oath as part of a betrothal. Christ has betrothed the church to Himself, and that betrothal and marriage covenant continues forever.

The question to begin with is: If betrothal is something that is prior to marriage, why is it so important if marriage is the goal? To answer that question, we need to understand that betrothal is the quality and substance of the unique bond between a man and a woman. Why is betrothal important? Consider if you were to get under a microscope and say, 'What is the thing that is joining this man and woman together? Let us analyse it.' It is the quality of it. It is a bond. There is a certain quality to it, and it

is actually substantial - this bond that the Lord is doing. It is the quality and substance of the unique bond between a man and a woman that then becomes the covenant upon which their marriage is established. If you find this bond, your marriage is established on that foundation. If you find another type of bond (a substandard quality bonding agent) unlike 'Selley's 3 in 1' (if you try something else), it is not going to last. That is the point. There are many other inferior products out there in the marketplace. Bond your marriage this way - it will work for you; it will be great. Cheap imitations will not last. There is one bond that will last and that is betrothal. It is the quality and substance of the bond.

The quality of the bond of betrothal is two mature spiritual people participating in a process of redefinition to become head and helper in relation to Christ, and then in relation to one another. This process of betrothal is a process of redefinition. The man is being redefined in relation to Christ to become head to this woman; and the woman is being redefined in relation to Christ to become helper to this man. They are made one by the Father through their participation in the offering of Christ so much so (I just love the verse in Mark chapter 10 verse 9) ... 'Therefore what God the Father has joined together, let not man separate.' The point is that if God the Father does this work in your marriage or in your courtship, then we are not to separate it. It is actually that He has joined you together and He has betrothed you to one another. He is doing that because He loves the institution of marriage which He has given to you. And He loves the fruit of that marriage, which is all the godly fruit that is to come. Therefore, what God has joined... (that word actually means to 'yoke together'). This bond of betrothal is a yoking. Betrothal is therefore a covenantal commitment to be redefined in relation to the other and to your one spirit bond.

Consider if betrothal is not the focus of a courtship relationship. Let us think now of a

couple (a man and a woman) who are in a courtship. If their focus is not betrothal, then by default they will bond, but it will be in another way. If you are in a courtship relationship, you will bond, but what is the nature of that bond? If betrothal is not your focus, there will be some other way that you are bonded or yoked together. There are actually myriads of these alternative bonds, and they are not betrothal. I am keen for us not to take the word 'betrothal' as a term and apply it to everything that looks bonded. Can I encourage us that way? Let us not say 'betrothal' and apply that saying, 'That must be betrothal.' No, betrothal is a unique kind of bond. Let us not call everything betrothal. Let us be redefined in relation to what this is. I will list a few of these alternative bonds, and you can come up with others. These will be a good discussion point. What was the bond of our courtship that led to our marriage covenant?

These alternative bonds are defined by Solomon as 'nets and bands'. The net is a self-centred romantic projection. It is the image of what we will be. The band is a selfish covenant. This is an agreement whether (spoken or unspoken), that a man and woman has to service that romantic projection. So the relationship becomes nets and bands. Solomon described a marriage formed on this kind of bond as 'more bitter than death'. Ecclesiastes chapter 7 verse 26: 'And I find more bitter than death the woman [let us say, 'the relationship'] whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters [bands]. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be trapped by her.'

What are those alternative bonds that can come between a man and a woman that become the foundation of your marriage covenant? Let us list a few. I have the bond of fallen romance. We will not explain all these, but just to take one for example - the bond of fallen romance. It is the obligation to keep things nice and to service the idol of our fallen romantic projection. We avoid accountability, and we avoid anything that

jeopardises that romantic niceness. Now, for those of us who are married, in the nature of your courtship season, whether you spoke that or not, does not mean you do not have that as part of your bond. So in your marriage then, you are always obligated to service something. You are servicing the niceness - the easiness. There is not a process; not a willingness to address matters; reacting when they are addressed. So that is the bond of fallen romantic connection. Amazingly, the Lord actually wants to undo that bond, which is a miracle. This is the season. This is why I am saying, 'Do not miss this word in this season.' He wants to reset the foundations of your marriage; or reset the foundations of your courtship; or for you as young people, to make sure when you do come to that season, that you are looking at the right goal - that you have the right focus in mind.

Here are some other ones. These are just my ways of describing them. We have the bond of fallen romance. Now the bond of 'conquering versus subservient'. Who is actually in control? The bond of empowerment; of lifestyle pursuits. We have a lifestyle expectation and we are servicing that. Existential living - I am only responding to life when it hits me. The possessive bond; seduction; feminisation; mechanistic (there is a legal tenure in relation to the word); wantonness; sexual immorality; teenage infatuation... The list goes on. That is just a short brainstorm of some alternative bonds. Maybe you can think and that can be a discussion point.

What was the nature of our season that led to our marriage and what were the bonds? Maybe it is not just one; maybe it is a mixture of these. What was the nature of the bond that became part of our marriage covenant and what is the Lord wanting to undo in this season? In one sense, all those bonds are an unequal yoking. This is 2 Corinthians 6 verse 14: 'Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' Can you see that if the bond or yoke is any of these, it is an unequal bond. You should be bonded in

a way that is spiritual - focused on this redefinition.

You might have heard in this season that we have referred to the bond formed within the season of courtship to be like the foundations and the reinforcing steel that becomes set in concrete when you are married through the covenant of marriage. It is like the season approaching your wedding. You are hearing the reversing beep of the concrete truck as it reverses in to set in concrete with whatever bond you have. Beep, beep, beep. Impending doom. (We do not have to be *that* afraid of getting married.) But can you see the point? Something is set; you have formed something in this season of your courtship. That is why the betrothal, prior to marriage, is so important. Let us get the foundations dug right. Let us get the reo bar in the right spot; let us get the blueprint right. Then we are very happy to pour the concrete and set that as the foundation of a marriage relationship. This becomes set in concrete, hence the importance of getting these foundations set properly.

It is important to understand that by default, a man and a woman will bond in one of those alternative ways that we just listed, unless they are applying themselves with diligence to the process by which they are delivered from all these alternative bonds. It need not even be spoken; it is just the way you tick and respond to life. It is what you are after; it is the affirmation or the validation of your romantic image for life or whatever it may be. It is not that you have signed a written contract. It is likely all unspoken, but that becomes part of how you have formed your bond.

But you can, in a season of courtship, walk blamelessly by the spirit, embracing a process that is delivering you from these alternative bonds. To encourage us in this season, as a presbytery of shepherds and overseers, we are in this season repenting from our lack of application to guide a courting couple or even to guide individuals before they start a friendship towards marriage in relation to the focus or goal of

betrothal. I will flag up front that, as a presbytery, we are in a season of repentance to say we have not helped the young people as we should have; to say that even before they start, let us get the goal right - betrothal is what you are aiming for. We are repenting because we have let things run on and then tried to help it get over the line. But we can do much better than that. We can be engaged from the beginning, with a young person to say, 'Here is the faith for you in relation to the season of courtship and in relation to your marriage.' As a presbytery, we are repenting from our lack of application to guide a courting couple.

We have now understood in this season, that the process of betrothal begins with friendship. That is new for me because I always understood the five questions (or the five progressive stages) of a courtship to be 'friendship, romance, courtship, bonding, marriage'. I thought, 'You just do whatever you want to for the first three (Not exactly – but...) and bonding is where this question really comes to the fore. Let us go back right to the beginning and say, 'With friendship, you have to have betrothal in view, because as you are developing your friendship, you are already bonding.' The bond is already starting.

Listen to Peter Hay's word from the National Youth Seminar as he spoke on the greatest love which is to lay your life down for your friends. And *agape* love is the greatest love. It is not some lesser love that then is superseded by romantic love. The way a young man and a woman form their friendship is how they are already starting to bond. It needs to be sanctification and honour as the bond as they give themselves to the greatest love. This is John 15 verse 13: 'Greater love has no one than this [There is no other greater love; this is the greatest love] than to lay down your life for your friends.' This is the beginning of a relationship formed on this foundation.

I am continuing to unpack the presbytery's repentance. In former times, we may have even said (or it might have been interpreted

that we have said) that a courtship needs to happen in the homes, and we do not want to know about your courtship until you have chosen to marry. Then knock on the door of the church and ask for counsel. Can I blow that mindset (or that perspective) out of the water? Let us annihilate that one. I think that the reason we might have said that is because we did not want to impose on the freedom of choice for those two individuals to choose one another. That is right in the sense that the freedom of choice is an essential foundation for a relationship towards marriage, but it is not the whole picture. In one sense, we could say that we have backed off too much to make sure that the couple had the freedom of choice. But that is not the answer. We need to be engaged as shepherds and overseers and fathers amongst the flock to help them. Just because we are engaged is not going to impose on their freedom of choice. Let us be clear: As a presbytery, we are not saying that. We do want to know about your courtship, your friendship even before you begin sowing to this season.

I will explain the reason for that. We want to be fully engaged with you for the whole season. In one sense, we have let those courting run on in their fallen romance and then in the season of bonding towards marriage right at the end, endeavouring to cajole their carnally romantic-driven relationship into something better or something spiritual. The freedom of choice is important; but it is not 'the best'. It is 'the better', but 'the best' is betrothal. You have to get freedom of choice, but the thing that is 'better than the best' is betrothal. We are not going to miss freedom of choice just because we are focused on betrothal together. The reason that the presbytery is keen to be connected with young people in this season is because we have understood that the covenant of marriage is God the Father's holy institution which He loves. God the Father has entrusted this covenant of marriage to the fathers, for them to guard and to carry. I love this in Malachi chapter 2 verse 10: 'Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal

treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers?' Then Malachi goes on to describe the covenant of marriage as the Father's holy institution. To catch the point, the Father has committed the covenant of marriage not to couples - He has committed that to fathers. And this includes godly fathers and grandfathers in a family. It also includes shepherds and overseers amongst the flock - those who are part of this fatherhood.

The Father has committed this to the covenant of the fathers for them to guard and to carry. This means two things: Firstly, we need fathers to guard the establishment of this covenant of marriage so that it honours God the Father. That is on the fathers. Secondly, those who are seeking to court will only find betrothal through engagement with the fathers. If God gave His covenant (His holy institution to the fathers), you are not going to get a marriage covenant that honours God the Father unless you engage with the fathers. So that is why, as a presbytery, we are stepping forward to say we want to be involved from the beginning - even before the beginning. We want to walk with you as a fellowship so we can guard, we can care, we can encourage you and help you find this bond of betrothal.

I will broaden this season of repentance. For households, this is also a season of repentance, because betrothal has not been the focus of how you have encouraged your children to court and to marry. It has not been the primary thing in your engagement with your kids. In fact, in leaving courtship to happen in the homes, this has meant that some families have imposed on the choice of their children in order to make it happen or to help it along. That has imposed on the freedom of choice, and that has impacted the nature of the bond that has been formed. Can I flag for households, this is a season for repentance for you because betrothal needs to be the foremost focus of your engagement with your children as they are approaching this season of Christian courtship towards marriage?

Parents, I will add to that point. Repentance in the light of this word does not look like you disengaging from your children or your grandchildren and presuming the church will take care of it for you. That is not what repentance in the light of this word looks like. That is just a carnal pendulum swing. 'We did it wrong. We were too engaged. Now we are going to disengage.' Do not do that. Can I encourage you there? There is a better way for you to engage your kids in relation to this season.

Let us understand what this repentance looks like and let us broaden this season of repentance even further. For married couples, we are giving thanks for the Lord's guidance in the season of our courtship. We did find something as we were walking in the light of the word in that season. Whatever the nature of your courtship season was... if you were, at that stage with the Lord and walking in the light of His word, you did find something and that became part of the foundation for you. However (and I think it is safe to say that for the majority of us), betrothal was not the focus of our courtship. It might have been serving the Lord, ('As for me and my house, let us serve the Lord'), or it might have been care of one another. Whatever the nature of what we found, we are thankful to the Lord; but we did not find betrothal.

Therefore, for all of us who are married, this is a season of repentance for us as we address the nature of our bond as husband and wife. We have used this picture of the concrete truck and the set foundations. Although the foundations of how you relate in your marriage have been set in concrete, the Lord is giving us a season of grace for those foundations to be made new. This is Ezra chapter 9 verse 8. 'Now for a little while grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage.' 'A measure of revival' is your marriage relationship being made new. This is amazing. What is set in

concrete is now actually being reformed and reset as you apply yourself to this word. That is a miracle. The Lord can restore the foundations of your marriage, and the way that you have bonded, and your chemistry of how you relate, and the alternative things that you have to service over and over and over again. That can be made new as you are receiving this word and walking in the light of this word. This is a short season of grace that is being shown from the Lord our God to us as married couples that the quality of our relational foundations can be reformed and reset as we abide in the fellowship of this word. That is beautiful. Grace for a season shown to us today.

For courting couples and for young people, this is also a season of repentance for you so that you can turn from your expectations and from your alternative ideas or ideals for what marriage is going to mean for you. Redefinition through sanctification and becoming one needs to be your focus before, during and after your courtship. Unless you are delivered through repentance to the process by which these alternative expectations and ideals are being removed, you will by default form another kind of bond.

Is anyone left out? I do not think anyone is. If anyone is, this is a whole season for all of us, because all of us are repenting in relation to how we have engaged Christ as our Husband.

I will get to that point now. The question I want to really capture is: What does this repentance look like? If we are going to catch this word (and my real burden today is to say), do not miss this word. What does this repentance look like for the presbytery, for households, for parents, for married couples, for courting couples, and for young people - for all of us? The apostle Paul explained that godly sorrow (or godly mourning) leads to repentance and that repentance brings forth seven fruits. These are 'diligence, clearing, indignation, fear, desire, zeal and vindication'. 2 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 11: 'For observe this very thing, that you

sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.'

Paul then demonstrated this zeal. I am just picking up that one fruit, which is from repentance. He demonstrated this zeal by addressing the Corinthian congregation as part of the bride who was betrothed to Christ. This is 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 2. Paul said, 'For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy... [Can you see this is a zeal? He is zealous for the nature of their bond to Christ] ...For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy [Let us say it this way - 'I am *zealous* for you with a godly *zealousy*' (that is not a word) – godly zeal. He is saying to this congregation], for I have betrothed you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.' Can you see that the fruit of Paul's repentance is his zeal for the bond? He is saying, 'I am concerned how you are relating to your Husband, who is Christ.' In the very next verse, he then says, '...because you are becoming like Eve - deceived to engage another conversation because you are disengaged from the fellowship of headship that is coming to you through a presbytery - the headship of Christ.'

The Lord is speaking to all of us because it is how we are bonded to Christ. This is actually the foremost thing that the Lord is saying to us: we have not been a very good wife. We have not been a very good wife by betrothal to Christ in relation to how we are respecting Him as our Husband and our Head. This is the zeal that Paul is demonstrating when we catch this repentance. It is the same zeal that we also will show in relation to this word. And it looks like a zealous conversation of faith in our houses. As you go back to your house, may this word become a zealous conversation and may it become part of the water of the river of life that is washing you, and from you, washing and encouraging others. Can I encourage us to that zeal in this

season? Let us not miss that. That is what the Lord wants for us to catch today.

What do repentance and zeal look like? Zeal looks like a zeal for the bond of betrothal. It does not look like zeal for the wedding dress; or for the romantic image for my life; or to keep our fallen marriage covenant nice and tidy. It does not look like getting our kids married; nor it does not look like anything that belongs to fallen romance. That is not the zeal. The zeal is that the Lord is teaching us how to relate to Him. He is teaching us how to relate in our marriages, and how to relate to our kids in relation to marriage. This zeal looks like a conversation of faith believing for the quality and substance of the bond of betrothal as the foundation for your marriage or for your courtship or for the courtship of your child.

I will pick up the analogy of being set in concrete, and why the presbytery and the fathers are so keen to be engaged. This is godly fathers in families and grandfathers too. It is because (to pick up the picture) before the concrete is poured, let us get the foundations and the reo in the right place. What has happened is that you come on site and you realise, 'Hang on, the foundation is in the wrong spot. The reo is in the wrong spot.' Let us be encouraged to have a site visit before we turn ground and let us get the blueprint right. Let us not wait until you have developed a whole relational bond and we are then trying to make it better and fix it up. That is a lot of kerfuffle. Let us get the blueprint right from the beginning.

The warning for us in this season is that when the Lord exposes the nature of your bond... (That is whether you are married or whether you are courting, and you recognise that it is not betrothal; it is not the quality of what this betrothal looks like - which is you being redefined in relation to your spouse and your spouse in relation to you and that the Father making you one - so that is the focus.) ...when the Lord exposes that bond, and you recognise it is not what it should be, the question for us is: What are we going to do about it? How are we going to respond

when the Lord exposes the nature of our bond?

For those of us who have formed another bond (for example a fallen romantic obligation in our courtship), I am saying this for those who are married. For us who are married, those alternative bonds in one sense were formed in our ignorance because we did not know. The Lord then says in Acts 17 verse 30, 'Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.' Likewise, Paul said, 'I did this in ignorance.' But the warning for us is because this word is coming to you and the messengers are proclaiming this word to you and it is exposing the nature of how you relate in your marriage or your courtship and you do not turn and do not find repentance, then you are not doing that in ignorance anymore. You are doing it in full awareness. If you were courting and this word is coming and you are realising, 'Yikes, the nature of our bond is not betrothal, but I am going to go ahead with it anyway. I just want to get married.' Okay, you cannot. That is not doing it in an ignorance that the Lord will overlook. That is you willingly choosing something that is opposite from what He is showing you in the season of this word. This is a warning for us.

For those of us who formed another bond, we did it in ignorance. However, to choose that knowingly, or to be unwilling to reform your marriage bond now that the messengers have revealed this to you, is actually to forfeit our sanctification. This is a massive point. In so doing, you are forfeiting your salvation. This is Romans chapter 6 verse 22. 'But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness [meaning 'sanctification'] and the end, everlasting life.' This is a huge point on the significance of this redefinition. For both the man and the woman, their sanctification in relation to Christ and now in relation to each other is their eternal life. You cannot say, 'I love Christ, but I am unwilling to sanctify myself as head or helper to my spouse.' For men, you cannot

say, 'I am unwilling to love my wife and to stand as a head for her sake.' And for a woman, you cannot say, 'I am unwilling to submit to my husband and stand as a helper for his sake.' To do so is to forfeit your sanctification and to forfeit your salvation. The redefinition of a man to become head to this woman is significant. This is his salvation. For a woman, her redefinition to become helper to this man is significant. It is her salvation; it is her sanctification.

The wonderful thing is that as you hear this word, grace is being poured out to you. This is the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord that is giving you grace and enabling you to choose to sanctify yourself for the sake of your spouse. As a man, as a head to your wife, or as a woman, as a helper to your husband, grace is being poured out to you. This is each person's freedom now to choose to sanctify themselves for the sake of the other. In that way, the man is choosing to be redefined in relation to be head to his wife. If we have never stood properly as a head to our wife, there is grace in this season to do so. That is beautiful. You can receive the faith of that today. You cannot say, 'It is too hard, I cannot stand as head to my wife.' The Spirit is being poured out to you. He is enabling you to stand and to offer yourself in a new way to your wife.

For the woman who is courting, she is choosing to leave father and mother and to be separated to this man and to no one else so that they together become a new expression of man as male and female within the fellowship of headship. This is significant - this redefinition.

I will finish on this point: The redefinition of a man to a woman and the redefinition of a woman to a man is significant, but that also touches all relationships. Let us catch this as we conclude. This redefinition is significant. The man is being reorientated to Christ as his Head and then redefined as head to this woman. The woman is being redefined as helper to this man. However, redefinition also touches the family. And indeed, it touches every relationship within the body of

Christ, so much so that it redefines the way that others relate now to this couple and to these two individuals. This becomes a necessary crisis point. For the man, that is a necessary crisis point; for the woman also. But let us add here today that for the family and for all of us this is a necessary crisis point to be re-orientated in your relationship with your son or daughter. This becomes a necessary crisis point too, particularly for parents to let their daughter be redefined to this man. For some, this may mean that she will be relocated to be placed by God the Father in the elect lady (or the local congregation) of another city where this man is laying his life down. If a woman is choosing to be redefined in relation to this man, the family of that woman has to let her do that. That is significant. You have to let her be redefined. That may mean travelling to Timbuktu, because he is a man from Timbuktu. You are needing to do that. This redefinition is hugely significant. I am pretty sure to say that none of us have understood this in its entirety. This is the word to us in this season - to catch this. Can I encourage us to not miss the season?

We have not necessarily gone much into the process of this betrothal, but I will give you a hint. What came from Christ's side was water, blood and the sevenfold Spirit. As we are applying ourselves to those three elements of Christ's rib, we are being formed as a comparable bride to Him. That same process is available to a courting couple. That is the process by which you are made one and redefined. My real burden today is to make sure that we do not miss this season.

I will finish with one definition. Let us just make sure we get this betrothal up front. True betrothal is the unique bond of a man and a woman who are both spiritually mature and who are participating in this process of redefinition in relation to Christ and in relation to one another. This redefinition is happening through sanctification. They are choosing to sanctify themselves, and this is happening before they marry. Furthermore, they are being

made one in the offering of Christ by the Father. Betrothal therefore is the commitment to be redefined in relation to each other and to their one spirit bond. Praise the Lord, I will leave it there for today.