

Sermon # 12

Christ the Believer's Husband

By: George Whitefield

"For thy Maker is thy Husband."

Isaiah 54:5

Although believers by nature, are far from God, and children of wrath, even as others, yet it is amazing to think how nigh they are brought to him again by the blood of Jesus Christ. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of any man living, fully to conceive, the nearness and dearness of that relation, in which they stand to their common head. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Behold, says the blessed Jesus in the days of his flesh, "my mother and my brethren." And again after his resurrection, "go tell my brethren." Nay sometimes he is pleased to term believers his friends. "Henceforth call I you no longer servants, but friends." "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." And what is a friend? Why there is a friend that is nearer than a brother, nay as near as one's own soul. And "thy friend, (says God in the book of Deuteronomy) which is as thy own soul." Kind and endearing applications these, that undoubtedly bespeak a very near and ineffably intimate union between the Lord Jesus and the true living members of his mystical body! But, methinks, the words of our text point out to us a relation, which not only comprehends, but in respect to nearness and dearness, exceeds all other relations whatsoever. I mean that of a Husband, "For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called."

These words were originally spoken to the people of the Jews, considered collectively as a peculiar people, whom our Lord had betrothed and married to himself; and they seem to be spoken, when religion was on the decline among their churches; when they had, in a great measure, lost that life and power, which they once experienced; and their enemies began to insult them with a "where is now your God?" Such a state of things must undoubtedly be very afflicting to the true mourners in Zion; and put them upon crying unto the Lord, in this their deep distress. He hears their prayer, his bowels yearn towards them; and in the preceding verse, he assures them, that though the enemy had broken in upon them like a flood, yet their extremity should be his opportunity to lift up a standard against him. "Fear not, (says the great Head and King of his church) for thou shalt not be ashamed (finally or totally); neither be thou confounded, (dissipated or dejected, giving up all for gone, as though thou never shouldst see better days, or another revival of religion) for thou shalt not (entirely) be put to shame;" though for a while, for thy humiliation, and the greater confusion of thy adversaries, I suffer them to triumph over thee: "For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach

of thy widow-hood any more;" i.e. I will vouchsafe you such another glorious gale of my blessed Spirit, that you shall quite forget your former troubled widow-state, and give your enemies no more occasion to insult you, on account of your infant-condition, but rather to envy you, and gnash their teeth, and melt away at the sight of your un-thought-of glory and prosperity. And why will the infinitely great and condescending Jesus deal thus with his people? Because the church is his spouse; "For, (as in the words just now read to you) thy Maker is thy husband; thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel;" and therefore he loves them too well, to let thy enemies always trample thee under foot. "The Lord of Hosts is his name, the God of the whole earth shall he be called;" and therefore he is armed with sufficient power to relieve his oppressed people, and over come and avenge himself of all their haughty and insulting foes.

This seems to be the prime and genuine interpretation of the text and context, especially if we add, that they may have a further view to the latter-day glory, and that blessed state of the church, which the people of God have been looking for in all ages, and the speedy approach of which, we undoubtedly pray for, when we put up that petition of our Lord's, "thy kingdom come."

But, though the words were originally spoken to the Jews, yet they are undoubtedly applicable to all believers in all ages, and, when enlarged on in a proper manner, will afford us suitable matter of discourse both for sinners and for saints; for such as know God, as well as for such who know him not; and likewise for those, who once walked in the light of his blessed countenance, but are now backslidden from him, have their harps hung upon the willows, and are afraid that their beloved is gone, and will return to their souls no more. Accordingly, without prefacing this discourse any further, as I suppose that a mixed multitude of saints, unconverted sinners, and backsliders, are present here this day, I shall endeavor to speak from the words of the text, that each may have a proper portion, and none be went empty away.

In prosecuting this design, I will,

I. Endeavor to show, what must pass between Jesus Christ and our souls before we can say, "that our Maker is our husband."

II. The duties of love which they owe to our Lord, who stand in so near a relation to him,

III. The miserable condition of such as cannot yet say "their Maker is their husband." And

IV. I shall conclude with a general exhortation to all such unhappy souls, to come and match with the dear Lord Jesus. And O! may that God who blessed Abraham's servant, when he went out to seek a wife for his son Isaac, bless me, even me also, now I am come, I trust, relying on divine strength, to invite poor sinners, and recall backsliders, to my Master Jesus!

And FIRST, I am to show, what must pass between Jesus Christ and our souls before we can say, "Our Maker is our husband."

But before I proceed to this, it may not be improper to observe, that if any of you, amongst whom I am now preaching the kingdom of God, are enemies to inward religion, and explode the doctrine of inward feelings, as enthusiasm, cant and nonsense, I shall not be surprised, if your hearts rise against me whilst I am preaching; for I am about to discourse on true, vital, internal piety; and an inspired apostle hath told us, "that the natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit, because they are spiritually discerned." But, however, be noble as the Bereans were; search the Scriptures as they did; lay aside prejudice; hear like Nathaniel, with a true Israelitish ear; be willing to do the will of God; and then you shall according to the promise of our dearest Lord, "know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

I would further observe, that if any here do expect fine preaching from me this day, they will, in all probability, go away disappointed. For I came not here to shoot over people's heads; but, if the Lord shall be pleased to bless me, to reach their hearts. Accordingly, I shall endeavor to clothe my ideas in such plain language, that the meanest negro or servant, if God is pleased to give a hearing ear, may understand me; for I am certain, if the poor and unlearned can comprehend, the learned and rich must.

This being premised, proceed we to show what must pass between Jesus Christ and our souls, before we can say, "our Maker is our husband."

Now, that we may discourse more pertinently and intelligibly upon this point, it may not be amiss to consider, what is necessary to be done, before a marriage between two parties amongst ourselves, can be said to be valid in the sight of God and men. And that will lead us in a familiar way, to show what must be done, or what must pass between us and Jesus Christ, before we can say, "our Maker is our husband."

And FIRST, in all lawful marriages, it is absolutely necessary, that the parties to be joined together in that holy and honorable estate, are actually and legally freed from all pre-engagements whatsoever. "A woman is bound to her husband, (saith the apostle) so long as her husband liveth." The same law holds good in respect to the man. And so likewise, if either party be betrothed and promised, though not actually married to another, the marriage is not lawful, till that pre-engagement and promise be fairly and mutually dissolved. Now, it is just thus between us and the Lord Jesus. For, we are all by nature born under, and wedded to the law, as a covenant of works. Hence it is that we are so fond of, and artfully go about, in order to establish a righteousness of our own. It is as natural for us to do this, as it is to breathe. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, even after the covenant of grace was revealed to them in that promise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," reached out their hands, and would again have taken hold of the tree of life, which they had forfeited, had not God drove them out of paradise, and compelled them, as it were, to be saved by grace. And thus all their descendants naturally run to, and want to be saved, partly at least, if not wholly, by their works. And even gracious souls, who are inwardly renewed, so far as the old man abides in them, find a strong propensity this way. Hence it is, that natural men are generally so fond of Arminian principles. "Do and live," is the native language of a proud, self-righteous heart. But before we can say, "our Maker is our husband," we must be delivered from our

old husband the law; we must renounce our own righteousness, our own doings and performances, in point of dependence, whether in whole or part, as dung and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. For thus speaks the apostle Paul to the Romans, chapter 7:4, "Ye also are become dead to the law (as a covenant of works) by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him, who is raised from the dead." As he also speaketh in another place, "I have espoused you, as a chaste virgin to Jesus Christ." This was the apostle's own case. Whilst he depended on his being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and thought himself secure, because, as to the outward observation of the law, he was blameless; he was an entire stranger to the divine life: but when he began to experience the power of Jesus Christ's resurrection, we find him, in his epistle to the Philippians, absolutely renouncing all his external privileges, and all his Pharisaical righteousness; "Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, nay but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And thus it must be with us. Ere we can say, "our Maker is our husband." Though we may not be wrought upon in that extraordinary way in which the apostle was, yet we must be dead to the law, we must be espoused as chaste virgins to Jesus Christ, and count all external privileges, and our most splendid performances (as was before observed) only "ad dung and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord."

But further; before a marriage among us can stand good in law, both parties must not only be freed from all pre-engagements, but there must be a mutual consent on both sides. We are not used to marry people against their wills. This is what the Jews called betrothing, or espousing, a thing previous to the solemnity of marriage. Thus we find, the Virgin Mary is said to be espoused to Joseph, before they actually came together, Matt. 1:18. And thus it is among us. Both parties are previously agreed, and, as it were, espoused to each other, before we publish, what we call the banns of marriage concerning them. And so it will be in the spiritual marriage, between Jesus Christ and our souls. Before we are actually married or united to him by faith; or, to keep to the terms of the text, before we assuredly can say, that "our Maker is our husband," we must be made willing people in the day of God's power, we must be sweetly and effectually persuaded by the Holy Spirit of God, that the glorious Emanuel is willing to accept of us, just as we are, and also that we are willing to accept of him upon his own terms, yea, upon any terms. And when once it comes to this, the spiritual marriage goes on apace, and there is but one thing lacking to make it complete. And what is that? An actual union.

This is absolutely necessary in every lawful marriage among men. There must be a joining of hands before witnesses, ere they can be deemed lawfully joined together. Some men indeed of corrupt minds, are apt to look upon this as a needless ceremony, and think it sufficient to be married, as they term it, in the sight of God. But whence men get such divinity, I know not. I am positive, not from the Bible; for we there read that even at the first marriage in paradise, there was something of outward solemnity; God himself (if I may speak) being there the priest. For we are told, Gen. 2:22 that, after God had made the woman, "he brought her unto the man." And indeed, to lay aside all manner of outward ceremony in marriage, would be to turn the world into a den of brute beasts. Men would

then take, or forsake as many wives as they pleased, and we should soon sink into as bad and brutal a state, as those nations are, amongst whom such practices are allowed of, and who are utterly destitute of the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Whoever has experienced the power of his resurrection, I am persuaded will never plead for such a licentious practice. For the terms made us of in Scripture, to represent the mystical union between Christ and his church, such as, our being "joined to the Lord," and "married to Jesus Christ," are all metaphorical expressions, taken from some analogous practices amongst men. And as persons when married, though before twain, are now one flesh; so those that are joined to the Lord, and can truly say, "our Maker is our husband," are in the apostle's language, one spirit. This was typified in the original marriage of our first parents. When God brought Eve to Adam, he received her with joy at his hands, and said, "this is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." They had there, primarily, but one name. For thus speaks the sacred Historian, Gen. 5: 1-2, "In the day that God created man, he blessed them, and called their name Adam." And why? Because they were one flesh, and were to have but one heart. The self same terms are made use of in Scripture, to express the believer's union with Jesus Christ. We are called Christians, after Christ's name, because made partakers of Christ's nature. Out of his fullness, believers receive grace for grace. And therefore, the marriage state, especially by the apostle Paul, is frequently made use of, to figure out to us the real, vital union, between Jesus Christ and regenerate souls. This is termed by the apostle, Eph. 5:32, "A great mystery." But great as it is, we must all experience it, before we can say assuredly, that "our Maker is our husband." For what says our Lord, in that prayer he put up to his Father before his bitter passion? "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, shall be where I am, that they may be one with thee; even as thou, O Father, and I are one, I in them, and they in me, that we all may be made perfect in one." O infinite condescension! On ineffable union! Hence it is, that believers are said to be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Hence it is, that the apostle speaking of himself, says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." What an expression is that? How much does it comprehend? And, that we might not think this was something peculiar to himself, he puts this close question to the Corinthians; "Know ye not, that Christ is in you, unless you be reprobates?" Agreeable to what he says in his epistle to the Colossians; "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And hence it is, that our church, in the communion-office, directs the minister to acquaint all those who receive the sacrament worthily, that they are one with Christ, and Christ with them; that they dwell in Christ, and Christ in them. Words that deserve to be written in letters of gold, and which evidently show, what our reformers believed all persons must experience, before they could truly and assuredly say, that "their Maker is their husband."

From what has been delivered, may not the poorest and most illiterate person here present easily know whether or not he is really married to Jesus Christ. Some indeed, I am afraid, are so presumptuous as to affirm, as least to insinuate, that there is no such thing as knowing, or being fully assured, whilst here below, whether we are in Christ or not. Or at least, if there be such a thing, it is very rare, or was only the privilege of the primitive believers. Part of this is true, and part of this absolutely false. That this glorious privilege of a full assurance is very rare, is too, too true. And so it is equally too true, that real Christians, comparatively speaking, are very rare also. But that there is no such thing, or that this was only the privilege of the first followers of our blessed Lord, is directly

opposite to the word of God. "We know (says St. John, speaking of believers in general) that we are his, by the spirit which he hath given us;" and, "He that believeth hath the witness of himself;" "because you are sons (saith St. Paul) God hath sent forth his Spirit into your hearts, even the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Not that I dare affirm, that there is no real Christian, but what has this full assurance of faith, and clearly knows, that his Maker is his husband. In speaking thus, I should undoubtedly condemn some of the generation of God's dear children, who through the prevalence of unbelief, indwelling sin, spiritual sloth, or it may be, for want of being informed of the privileges of believers, may walk in darkness, and see no light; therefore, though I dare not affirm, that a full assurance of faith is absolutely necessary for the very being, yet I dare assert, that it is absolutely necessary, for the well being of a Christian. And for my own part, I cannot conceive, how any persons, that pretend to Christianity, can rest satisfied or contented without it. This is stopping short, on this side Jordan, with a witness. And gives others too much reason to suspect, that such persons, however high their profession may be, have, as yet, no true saving grace at all.

Men, whose hearts are set on this world's goods, or, to use our Lord's language, "the children of this world," act not so. I suppose there is scarce a single merchant in this great congregation, especially in these troublous times, that will venture out either his ship or cargo, without first insuring, both against the violence of an enemy, or a storm. And I suppose there is scarce a single house, of any considerable value, in any populous town or city, but the owner has taken out a policy from the fire-office, to insure it, in case of fire. And can I be so irrational as to think, that there is such a thing as securing my goods, and my house, and that there is no such thing as insuring, what is infinitely more valuable, my precious and immortal soul? Or if there be such a thing, as undoubtedly there is, what foolishness of folly must it needs be in men, that pretend to be men of parts, of good sense, and solid reasoning, to be so anxious to secure their ships against a storm, and their houses against a fire, and at the same time, not to be unspeakably more solicitous, to take a policy out of the assurance-office of heaven; even the soul and witness of the blessed Spirit of God, to insure their souls against that storm of divine wrath, and that vengeance of eternal fire, which will at the last decisive day come upon all those, who know not God, and have not obeyed his gracious gospel? To affirm therefore, that there is no such thing as knowing, that "our Maker is our husband;" or that it was a privilege peculiar to the first Christians, to speak in the mildest terms, is both irrational and unscriptural. Not that all who can say, their Maker is their husband, can give the same clear and distinct account of the time, manner and means of their being spiritually united and married by faith, to the blessed bridegroom of the church. Some there may be now, as well as formerly, sanctified from the womb. And others in their infancy and non-age, as it were silently converted. Such perhaps may say, with a little Scotch maiden, now with God, when I asked her, whether Jesus Christ had taken away her old heart, and given her a new one? "Sir, it may be, (said she,) I cannot directly tell you the time and place, but this I know, it is done." And indeed it is not so very material, though no doubt it is very satisfactory, if we cannot relate all the minute and particular circumstances, that attended our conversion; if so be we are truly converted now, and can say, the work is done, and that, "our Maker is our husband." And I question, whether there is one single adult believer, now on earth, who lived before conversion, either in a

course of secret or open sin, but can, in a good degree, give an account of the beginning and progress of a work of grace in his heart.

What think ye? Need I tell my married persons in this congregation, that they must go to the university, and learn the languages, before they can tell whether they are married or not? Or, if their marriage was to be doubted, could they not, think you, bring their certificates, to certify the time and place of their marriage; and the minister that joined them together in that holy state? And if you are adult, and are indeed married to Jesus Christ, though you may be unlearned, and what the world terms illiterate men, cannot you tell me the rise and progress, and consummation of the spiritual marriage, between Jesus Christ and your souls? Know you not the time, when you were first under the drawings of the Father, and Jesus began to woo you for himself? Tell me, O man, tell me, O woman, knowest thou not the time, or at least, knowest thou not, that there was a time, when the blessed Spirit of God stripped thee of the fig-leaves of thy own righteousness, hunted thee out of the trees of the garden of thy performances, forced thee from the embraces of thy old husband the law, and made thee to abhor thy own righteousness, as so many filthy rags? Canst thou not remember, when, after a long struggle with unbelief, Jesus appeared to thee, as altogether lovely, mighty and willing to save? And canst thou not reflect upon a season, when thy own stubborn heart was made to bend; and thou wast made willing to embrace him, as freely offered to thee in the everlasting gospel? And canst thou not, with pleasure unspeakable, reflect on some happy period, some certain point of time, in which a sacred something (perhaps thou couldst it not then well tell what) did captivate, and fill thy heart, so that thou couldst say, in a rapture of holy surprise, and ecstasy of divine love, "My Lord and my God! My beloved is mine, and I am his; I know that my Redeemer liveth;" or, to keep to the words of our text, "My Maker is my husband." Surely, amidst this great and solemn assembly, there are many that can answer these questions in the affirmative. For these are transactions, not easily to be forgotten; and the day of our espousals is, generally, a very remarkable day; a day to be had in everlasting remembrance.

And can any of you indeed, upon good grounds say, that your Maker is your husband? May I not then (as it is customary to wish persons joy who are just entered into the marriage state) congratulate you upon your happy change, and wish you joy, with all my heart? Sure am I that there was joy in heaven on the day of your espousals: and why should not the blessed news occasion joy on earth? May I not address you in the language of our Lord to the women that came to visit his sepulcher, "All hail!" for ye are highly favoured. Blessed are ye among men, blessed are ye among women! All generations shall call you blessed. What! "is your Maker your husband? The holy one of Israel your Redeemer?" Sing, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth! What an amazing stoop is this! What a new thing has God created on the earth! Do not your hearts, O believers, burn within you, when meditating on this unspeakable condescension of the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity? Whilst you are musing, does not the sacred fire of divine love kindle in your souls? And, out of the abundance of your hearts, do you not often speak with your tongues, and call upon all that is within you, to laud and magnify your Redeemer's holy name? Is not that God-exalting, self-abasing expression frequently in your mouths, "Why me, Lord, why me?" And are you not often constrained to break out into that devout

exclamation of Solomon, when the glory of the Lord filled the temple, "And will God indeed dwell with man?" ungrateful, rebellious, ill, and hell-deserving man! O, my brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you! Tears, while I am speaking, are ready to gush out. But they are tears of love and joy. How shall I give it vent? How shall I set forth thy happiness, O believer, thou bride of God! And is thy Maker thy husband? Is his name "The Lord of hosts?" Whom then shouldst thou fear? And is thy Redeemer the holy one of Israel? The God of the whole earth should he be called! Of whom then shouldst thou be afraid? He that toucheth thee, toucheth the very apple of God's eye. "The very hairs of thy head are all numbered;" and "it is better that a man should have a millstone tied round his neck, and be drowned in the sea, than that he should justly offend thee."

All hail, (I must again repeat it) thou Lamb's bride! For thou art all glorious within, and comely, through the comeliness thy heavenly bridegroom hath put upon thee. Thy garment is indeed of wrought gold; and, ere long, the King shall bring thee forth with a raiment of needle-work, and present thee blameless before his Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. In the mean while, well shall it be with you, and happy shall you be, who are married to Jesus Christ: for all that Christ has, is yours. "He is made of God to you, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and eternal redemption." "Whether Paul, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." All his attributes are engaged for your preservation, and all things shall work together for your good, who love God, and, by being thus married to the Lord Jesus, give an evident proof that you are called according to his purpose. What say you? When you meditate on these things, are you not frequently ready to cry out, What shall we render unto the Lord for all these mercies, which, of his free unmerited grace, he hath been pleased to bestow upon us? For, though you are dead to the law, as a covenant of works, yet you are alive to the law as a rule of life, and are in, or under the law (for either expression seems to denote the same thing) to your glorious husband, Jesus Christ.

Pass we on therefore to the

SECOND general head, under which I was to show, what duties of love they owe to Jesus Christ, who are so happy as to be able to say, "My Maker is my husband."

I say, duties of love. For being now married to Jesus Christ, you work not for life, but from life. The love of God constrains you, so that, if there was no written law, or supposing Jesus would set you at liberty from his yoke, so far as grace prevails in your hearts, you would say, we love our blessed bridegroom, and will not go from him.

And what does the Lord require of you? That we may speak on this head as plainly as may be, we shall pursue the method we began with; and, by carrying on the allegory, and examining what is required of truly Christian wives, under the gospel, infer what our Lord may justly demand of those who are united to him by faith, and can therefore say, "our Maker is our husband."

And here let us go to the law and to the testimony. What says the scripture? "Let the wife see that she REVERENCE her "husband." It is, no doubt, the duty of married women to

think highly of their husbands. From whom may husbands justly command respect, if not from their wives? The apostle's expression is emphatic. "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband;" thereby implying, that women, some of them at least, are too prone to disrespect their husbands; as Michal, Saul's daughter, despised David in her heart, when she tauntingly said, 2 Sam. 6:20, "How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself."

This is a source and fountain, from whence many domestic evils frequently flow. Women should remember the character that husbands sustain in scripture. They are to them, what Christ is to the church. And it is mentioned to the honor of Sarah, that she called Abraham "Lord." "Shall I have a child who am old, my Lord being old also?" It is remarkable, there are but two good words in that whole sentence, "my Lord," (for all the others are the language of unbelief) and yet those two words the Holy Ghost mentions to her eternal honor, and buries, as it were, the rest in oblivion. "Even as Sarah (says St. Peter) obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord." An evident proof how pleasing it is in the sight of God, for women in the married state to reverence and respect their husbands. Not that husbands therefore should lord it over their wives, or require too much respect at their hands. This would be unchristian, as well as ungenerous, indeed. They ought rather, as God has taken such care to keep up their authority, commanding their wives to reverence and respect them; they ought, I say, to be doubly careful, that they live so holy and un-blamable, as to lay their wives under no temptation to despise them. But to return from this digression. Does the apostle say, "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband?" May I not pertinently apply this caution to you who are married to Jesus Christ? See to it that you reverence and respect your husband. I say, SEE TO IT. For the devil will be often suggesting to you hard and mean thoughts against your husband. It was thus he beset our mother Eve, even in a state of innocence. He would fain persuade her to entertain hard thoughts of her glorious benefactor, "What, has God said, ye shall not eat of the trees of the garden?" Has he been so cruel to put you here in a beautiful garden only to vex and tease you? This he made use of as an inlet to all his succeeding insinuations. And this trade he is still pursuing, and will be pursuing to the very end of time. Besides, in the eyes of the world, Jesus Christ has no form or comeliness that they should desire him; and therefore, unless you "watch and pray," you will be led into temptation, and not keep up such high thoughts of your blessed Jesus as he justly deserves. In this you can never exceed. Women, perhaps may sometimes think too highly of, and, through excess of love, idolize their earthly comforts. But it is impossible for you to think too highly of your heavenly husband, Jesus Christ.

Farther, what says the apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians? Speaking of the marriage state, he says, "The wife is the glory of her husband;" as though he had said, a Christian wife should so behave, and so walk, as to be a credit to her husband. As Abigail was an honor to Nabal, and by her sweet deportment made up, in some degree, for her husband's churlishness. This is to be a help-meet indeed. Such a woman will be praised in the gate; and her husband get glory, and meet with respect on her account. And ought a woman to be the glory of her husband? How much more ought you, that are the Lamb's bride, so to live, and so to walk, as to bring glory, and gain respect, to the cause and interest of your

husband Jesus? This is what the apostle everywhere supposes, when he would draw a parallel between a temporal and spiritual marriage. "The woman, is the glory of her husband, even as the church is the glory of Christ." Agreeable to this, he tells the Corinthians, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God;" and as he also speaks to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 2:11-12, "As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you (as a father doth his children) that you would walk worthy of God who hath called you to his kingdom, and his glory." What an expression is here! "That you would walk worthy of God." O! how ought this, and such like texts, to stir up your pure minds, O believers, so to have your conversation in this world, that you may be what the apostle says some particular persons were, even "the glory of Christ." You are his glory; he rejoices over you with singing; and you should so walk, that all who know and hear of you, may glorify Christ in you.

SUBJECTION, is another duty, that is enjoined married women, in the word of God. They are to "be subject to their own husbands in every thing." Every lawful thing: "For, the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." And knowing how inapt some base minds would be to submit to the husband's authority, he takes care to enforce this duty of subjection by many cogent and powerful arguments." "For Adam was first made, and not Eve. Neither was the man made for the woman, but the woman for the man." And again, "The man was not first in the transgression, but the woman." Upon which accounts, subjection was imposed on her as part of her punishment. "Thy desire (says God) shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule (though not tyrannize) over thee." So then, to use the words of pious Mr. Henry, those who attempt to usurp authority over their husbands, not only contradict a divine command, but thwart a divine curse. And if women are to be subject to their own husbands in every thing, how much more ought believers, whether men or women, to be subject to Jesus Christ: for he is the head of the church. He has bought her by his blood. Believers therefore are not their own, but are under the highest obligations to glorify and obey Jesus Christ, in their bodies and their souls, which are his. Add to this, that his service, as it is admirably expressed in one of our collects, is perfect freedom. His commandments holy, just, and good. And therefore it is your highest privilege, O believers, to submit to, and obey them. Earthly husbands may be so mean as to impose some things upon their wives, merely to show their authority; but it is not so with Jesus Christ. He can and does impose nothing, but what immediately conduces to our present, as well as future good. In doing, nay, in suffering for Jesus Christ, there is a present unspeakable reward. And therefore I may say to believers, as the blessed Virgin said to the servants at the marriage in Cana, "Whatsoever he says unto you, do it." "For his yoke is easy, and his burden is light." And I believe it might easily be proved in a few minutes, that all the disorders which are now in the world, whether in church or state, are owing to a want of being universally, unanimously, cheerfully, and perseveringly conformed to the laws and example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Again, FAITHFULNESS in the marriage state, is strictly enjoined in the scriptures of truth. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled. But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Nay, adultery is an iniquity to be punished by the earthly judges; it dissolves the marriage relation. "For the man has not power over his own body,

but the woman; neither has the woman power over her own body, but the man." The heathens themselves have been taught this by the light of nature; and adultery, among some of them, is punished with immediate death. And ought married persons to be thus careful to keep the marriage-bed undefiled, how carefully then ought believers to keep their souls chaste, pure, and undefiled, now they are espoused to Jesus Christ? For there is such a thing as spiritual adultery; "O ye adulterers and adulteresses," saith St. James. And God frequently complains of his people's playing the harlot. Hence it is, that St. John, in the most endearing manner, exhorts believers to "keep themselves from idols." For the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and pride of life, are always ready to steal away our hearts from Jesus Christ. And every time we place our affections upon any thing more than Christ, we do undoubtedly commit spiritual adultery. For we admit a creature to rival the Creator, who is God over all, blessed for evermore. "Little children, therefore, keep yourselves from idols."

But it is time for me to draw towards the close of this head. FRUITFULNESS was a blessing promised by God to the first happy pair; "Increase and multiply, and replenish the earth." "Lo, children, and the fruit of the womb, (says the Psalmist) are a gift and heritage, which cometh of the Lord." And so, if we are married to Jesus Christ, we must be fruitful. In what? In every good word and work: for this speaks the Apostle, in his epistle to the Romans: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." What follows? "That we should bring forth fruit unto God." Glorious words, and proper to be considered in a peculiar manner, by such who would explode the doctrine of free justification, as an Antinomian doctrine, and as though it destroyed good works. No; it establishes, and lays a solid foundation, whereon to build the superstructure of good works. Titus is therefore commanded to "exhort believers to be careful to maintain good works." And "herein (says our Lord) is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven;" with a multitude of passages to the same purpose.

Moreover, it is required of wives, that they not only love and reverence their husbands, but that they also love and respect their HUSBAND'S FRIENDS. And if we are married to Jesus Christ, we shall not only reverence the bridegroom, but we shall also love and honor the bridegroom's friends. "By this, shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." "By this we know, (says the beloved disciple) that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren." Observe, the brethren, indefinitely; of whatever denomination. And this love must be "without dissimulation, and with a pure heart fervently." This was the case of the primitive Christians. They were all of one heart, and of one mind. It was said of them (O that it could be said of us!) "See how these Christians love one another!" They were of the same spirit as a good woman of Scotland was, who, when she saw a great multitude, as is customary in the country, coming from various parts to receive the blessed sacrament, saluted them with a "Come in, ye blessed of the Lord, I have an house that will hold an hundred of you, and a heart that will hold ten thousand." Let us go and do likewise.

Once more. Persons that are married, take one another FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE, for richer or for poorer, to love and to cherish each other in sickness and in health. And if we are married to Jesus Christ, we shall be willing to bear his CROSS, as well as to wear his CROWN. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Neither will they be compelled to do this, as Simon of Cyrene was, but they will be volunteers in his service; they will cry out, Crown him, crown him, when others are crying out, "Crucify him, crucify him." They will never leave or forsake him, but willingly follow the Captain of their salvation, though it be through a sea of blood.

I might run the parallel still further, and also enlarge upon the hints already given; but I fear I have said enough already to reproach most believers; I am sure I have said more than enough to abash and upbraid myself. For alas! how vilely, treacherously, and ungratefully have we behaved towards our spiritual husband, the dear Lord Jesus, ever since the day of our espousals? Had our friends, or even the wives of our own bosoms, behaved to us as we have behaved to our great and best friend, our glorious husband, we should have broken off our friendship, and sued for a bill of divorcement long ago. Under our first love, what promises did we make to him? But how frowardly have we behaved ourselves in this covenant? How little have we revered him? How often has our Beloved been no more to us than another beloved? How little have we lived to his glory? Have we not been a shame and reproach to his gospel? Have we not crucified him afresh, and has he not been sorely wounded in the house of his friends? Nay, has not his holy name been blasphemed through our means? For alas! how little have we obeyed him? How careless and indifferent have we been, whether we pleased him or not? We have often said, indeed, when commanded by him to go work in his vineyard, We go, Lord; but alas! we went not. Or if we did go, with what reluctance has it been? How unwilling to watch with our dear Lord and Master, only one hour? And of his sabbaths, how often have we said, What weariness is this? As for our adulteries, and spiritual fornications, how frequent, how aggravated have they been? Have not idols of all sorts, been suffered to fill up the room of the ever-blessed Jesus in our hearts? You that love him in sincerity, will not be offended if I tell you, that the 16th chapter of Ezekiel gives, in my opinion, a lively description of our behavior towards our Lord. We were, like base-born children, cast out in the field to the loathing of our persons: no eye pitied or had compassion on us. Jesus passed by, saw us polluted in our own blood, and said unto us, "Live," i.e. preserved us, even in our natural state, from death. And when his time of love was come, he spread the skirt of his imputed righteousness over us, and covered the nakedness of our souls, entered into covenant with us, and we became his. He washed us also with water, even in the laver of regeneration, and thoroughly washed us by his precious blood, from the guild of all our sins. He clothed us also with broidered work, and decked us with ornaments, even with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We did eat fine flour and honey at his ordinances, and we fed on Jesus Christ in our hearts by faith, with thanksgiving. In short, we were made exceeding beautiful, and the kingdom of God was erected in our hearts. We were renowned among our neighbors for our love to God, and all that know us took knowledge of us, that we had been with Jesus. But alas! how have we fallen, who were once sons of the morning! How have we trusted in our own beauty, have grown spiritually proud, and provoked our patient and unspeakably long-suffering Lord to anger? Where is that ardent love we spoke of, when we told him, that,

though we should die for him, we would not deny him in any wise? How desperately wicked, and deceitful above all things, have we proved our hearts to be, since we have done all these things, even the work of an imperious woman? These are great and numerous charges; but great and numerous as they are, there is not a single believer here present, but, if he knows his own heart, may plead guilty to some, or all of them. But this is a tender point: I see you concerned: your tears, O believers, are a proof of the anguish of your souls. And can any of us give any reason, why Jesus Christ should not give us a bill of divorcement, and put us away? May he not justly speak to us as he did to his adulteress Israel, in the aforementioned 16th of Ezekiel, "Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord; I will judge thee as women that break wedlock, and shed blood, are judged. I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy, because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things. Behold, therefore, I also will recompense thy way upon thy head. I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, who hast despised the oath, in breaking the covenant, the marriage contract that was between us." This, I am persuaded, you will confess to be the treatment which we all most justly deserve. But be not overwhelmed with over-much sorrow: for though the Lord our God is a jealous God, and will certainly visit our offenses with a rod, and our backslidings with a spiritual scourge, yet his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from us, nor suffer his truth to fail. Though we have changed, yet he changeth not: He abideth faithful: his loving-kindness abideth for evermore. Hark! how sweetly he speaks to his backsliding people of old; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help. I will heal their backsliding, and love them freely." And in the verses immediately following the words of the text, how comfortably does he address his espoused people! "In a little wrath, I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn, that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn, that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." O that this goodness may lead us to repentance! O that this unparalleled, infinite, unchangeable love, may constrain us to an universal, uniform, cheerful, unanimous, persevering obedience to all the commands of God!

Brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you, and I could dwell a long while upon the many great and precious invitations that are made to backsliders, to return to their first love, and do their first works: but it is high time for me, if, as was proposed,

III. I give to every one their proper portion; to speak to those poor souls, who know nothing of this blessed Bridegroom of the church, and consequently cannot say, "My Maker is my husband."

Ah! I pity you from my inmost soul; I could weep over, and for you, though perhaps you will not weep for yourselves. But surely you would weep, and howl too, did you know the miserable condition those are in, who are not married to Jesus Christ. Will you give me leave (I think I speak it in much love) to inform you, that if you are not married to Jesus Christ, you are married to the law, the world, the flesh, and the devil, neither of

which can make you happy; but all, on the contrary, concur to make you miserable. Hear ye not, ye that are married to the law, and seek to be justified in the sight of God, partly, at least, if not wholly, by your own works, what the law saith to those that are under it, as a covenant of works? "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." Every word breathes threatening and slaughter to poor fallen creatures. Cursed, both here and hereafter, be this man, and every one, naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam, without exception, that continueth not, even to the very end of life, in all things; not only in some, or many, but in all things, that are written in the book of the law, to do them, in the utmost perfection; for "he that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all." So that, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, whosoever is guilty of one wicked thought, word, or action, is under the curse of an angry sin-avenging God. "For a many as are under the law, are under the curse." And do you know what it is to be under the curse of God, and to have the wrath of God abide upon you? If you did, I believe you would not be so unwilling to be divorced from the law, and be espoused, as chaste virgins, to Jesus Christ.

And why are ye so wedded to the world? Did it ever prove faithful or satisfactory to any of its votaries? Has not Solomon reckoned up the sum total of worldly happiness? And what does it amount to? "Vanity, vanity, saith the preacher, all is vanity," nay he adds, "and vexation of spirit." And has not a greater than Solomon informed us, that a man's life, the happiness of a man's life, doth not consist in the things which he possesseth? Besides, "know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity with God; so that whosoever will be a friend to the world, (to the corrupt customs and vices of it) is an enemy of God?" And what better reasons can you give for being wedded to your lusts? Might not the poor slaves in the galleys, as reasonably be wedded to their chains? For do not your lusts fetter down your souls from God? Do they not lord it, and have they not dominion over you? Do not they say, Come, and ye come; Go, and ye go; Do this, and ye do it? And is not he or she that liveth in pleasure, dead, whilst he liveth? And above all, how can ye bear the thoughts of being wedded to the devil, as every natural man is: for thus speaks the scripture, "He now ruleth in the children of disobedience." And how can ye bear to be ruled by one, who is such a professed open enemy to the most high and holy God? Who will make a drudge of you, whilst you live, and be your companion in endless and extreme torment, after you are dead? For thus will our Lord say to those on the left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But,

IV. Will you permit me, O sinners, that I may draw towards a close of this discourse, to propose a better match to your souls. This is a part of the discourse which I long to come to, it being my heart's desire, and earnest prayer to God, that your souls may be saved. "And now, O Lord God Almighty, thou Father of mercies, and God of all consolations, thou God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast promised to give thy Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, send me good speed this day. O Lord, send me now prosperity. Behold, I stand here without the camp, bearing a little of thy dear Son's sacred reproach! Hear me, O Lord, hear me, and according to thy word, let thy dear, thine only begotten Son, see of the travail of his

soul, and be satisfied! O help me so to speak, that many may believe on, and cleave unto thy blessed, thine holy child Jesus!

But who am I, that I should undertake to recommend the blessed Jesus to others, who am myself altogether unworthy to take his sacred name into my polluted lips? Indeed, my brethren, I do not count myself worthy of such an honor; but since it has pleased him, in whom all fullness dwells, to count me worthy, and put me into the ministry, the very stones would cry out against me, did I not attempt, at least, to lisp out his praise, and earnestly recommend the ever-blessed Jesus to the choice of all.

Thus Abraham's faithful servant behaved, when sent out to fetch a wife for his master Isaac. He spake of the riches and honors, which God had conferred on him; but what infinitely greater honors and riches, has the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, conferred on his only Son, to whom I now invite every Christless sinner! To you, therefore, I call, O ye sons of men, assuring you, there is everything in Jesus that your hearts can desire, or hunger and thirst after. Do people in disposing of themselves or their children in marriage, generally covet to be matched with PERSONS OF GREAT NAMES? Let this consideration serve as a motive to stir you up to match with Jesus. For God the Father has given him a name above every name; he has upon his vesture, and upon his thigh, a name written, "The King of kings, and the Lord of lords;" and herein the text we are told, "The Lord of Hosts is his name." Nor has he an empty title, but power equivalent; for he is a prince, as well as savior. "All power is given unto him, both in heaven and on earth;" "The God of the while earth, (says our text) he shall be called." The government of men, of the church, and of devils, is put upon his shoulders: "Thrones, principalities and powers, are made subject unto him; by him kings reign, and prince's decree justice; he setteth up one, and putteth down another: and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Will RICHES be an inducement unto you to come and match with Jesus? Why then, I can tell you, the riches of Jesus are infinite: for unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach to poor sinners, the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. I appeal to you that are his saints, whether you have not found this true, by happy experience; and though some of you, may have been acquainted with him thirty, forty, fifty years ago, do you not find his riches are yet unsearchable, and as much past finding out, as they were the very first moment in which you gave him your hearts?

Would you match with a WISE HUSBAND? Haste then, sinners, come away to Jesus: He is the fountain of wisdom, and makes all that come unto him, wise unto salvation: "He is the wisdom of the Father: the Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. When he prepared the heavens, he was there; when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then was he with him, as one brought up with him; he was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." As he is wise, so is he HOLY; and therefore, in the words of our text, he is stilled, "The Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:" and by the angel Gabriel, "That holy Thing." The apostles, addressing God the Father, stile him his "holy child Jesus:" and the spirits of just men made perfect, and the angels in heaven, cease not day or night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy." Nor is his BEAUTY inferior to his wisdom or holiness; the seraphs veil their faces, when they appear before him: "He is the chiefest among ten thousand, nay, he is altogether lovely." And, as he is altogether

lovely, so is he altogether LOVING: his name and his nature is Love. God, God in Christ is love: love in the abstract. And in this has he manifested his love, in that, whilst we were yet sinners, may open enemies, Jesus, in his own due time, died for the ungodly. He loved us so as to give himself for us. O what manner of love is this! What was Jacob's love to Rachel, in comparison of the love which Jesus bore to a perishing world! He became a curse for us. For it is written, "Cursed is every man that hangeth upon a tree." What Zipporah said to her husband improperly, Jesus may say properly to his spouse the church, "A bloody wife hast thou been to me, because of the crucifixion." For he has purchased her with his own blood. And having once loved his people, he loves them unto the end. His love, like himself, is from everlasting to everlasting. He hates putting away: though we change, yet he changeth not: he abideth faithful. When we are married here, there comes in that shocking clause, t use the words of holy Mr. Boston, "Till death us doth part:" but death itself shall not separate a true believer from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus his Lord: for he will never cease loving his Bride, till he has loved her to heaven, and presented her before his Father, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Nay, his love will, as it were, but be beginning, through the endless ages of eternity.

And now, Sirs, what say you? Shall I put that question to you, which Rebecca's relations, upon a proposal of marriage, put to her? "Will ye go with the man?" With the God-man, this infinitely great, this infinitely powerful, this all-wise, all-holy, altogether lovely, ever-loving Jesus? What objection have you to make against such a gracious offer? One would imagine, you had not a single one; but it is to be feared, through the prevalency of unbelief, and the corruption of your desperately wicked deceitful hearts, you are ready to urge several. Methinks I hear some of you say within yourselves, "We like the proposal, but alas! We are poor." Are you so? If that be all, you may, notwithstanding, be welcome to Jesus: "For has not God chosen the poor of this world, to make them rich in faith, and heirs of his everlasting kingdom?" And what says that Savior, to whom I am now inviting you? "Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for there is the kingdom of heaven." And what says his Apostle concerning him? "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. But say you, "We are not only poor, but we are in debt; we owe God ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay;" but that need not keep you back: for God the Father, from the Lord Jesus, his dearly beloved Son, has received double for all believers sins: the blood of Jesus cleanseth from them all. But you are blind, and miserable, and naked; to whom then should you fly for succor, but to Jesus, who came to open the eyes of the blind, to seek and save the miserable and lost, and clothe the naked with his perfect and spotless righteousness. And now, what can hinder your espousals with the dear and ever-blessed Lamb of God? I know but of one thing, that dreadful sin of unbelief. But this is my comfort, Jesus died for unbelief, as well as for other sins, and has promised to send down the Holy Spirit to convince the world of this sin in particular: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send the Comforter, and he will convince the world of son." What sin? of unbelief; "because they believe not on me." O that this promise may be so fulfilled in your hearts, and Jesus may so become the author of divine faith in your souls, that you may be able to send me the same message as a good woman in Scotland, on her dying bed, sent me by a friend: "Tell him, (says she) for his comfort, that at such a time he married me to the Lord Jesus." This would be comfort indeed. Not that we can marry you

to Christ: No; the Holy Ghost must tie the marriage knot. But such honor have all God's ministers; under him they espouse poor sinners to Jesus Christ. "I have espoused you (says St. Paul) as a chaste virgin to Jesus Christ." O that you may say, We will go with the man; then will I bow my head, as Abraham's servant did, and go with joy and tell my Master, that he has not left his poor servant destitute this day: then shall I rejoice in your felicity. For I know, my Master will take you into the banqueting-house of his ordinances, and his banner over you shall be love. That this may be the happy case of you all, may the glorious God grant, for the sake of Jesus his dearly beloved Son, the glorious bridegroom of his church, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and for evermore. Amen, and Amen. 🙏