

MARRIAGE

What An Eighty Year Old Preacher
Thinks About It.

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The marriage relation is the most important natural relation into which two persons are capable of entering. It is either promotive of happiness or unhappiness. In true marriage two persons make choice of each other as companions for life, not merely from selfish motives but from a cordial esteem for each other, and from congeniality of disposition, and a consequent love and affection. In marriage persons mutually pledge themselves, to bear each others burdens, and to promote each other's welfare, as their interests are so interwoven one with the other, that one cannot act independently of the other. They have virtually given themselves one to the other, so that their interests are mutual. It is reasonably expected that persons newly married should be quite happy, since they scarcely see any faults in each

other; but this pristine love and affection in course of time will abate. Familiarity often brings to view some unlikely traits of character, which may disturb the peace and harmony of the married life, and thus mar its happiness. But if the covenant is entered into through sincere love and pure motives, with due deliberation and a recognition of what is involved in the relation, there will be a disposition to mutually bear with each other, and thus love and affection will become more tempered and rational, and the bond of union will grow stronger, and the marriage relation will prove a blessing.

Notwithstanding the delicacy of the marriage relation and the serious duties it imposes and the consequent mutual sacrifices it requires the disposition of mankind in general is and has been, to enter into the relation. The importance

of the marriage relation can scarcely be overestimated. In very many cases it has been a fruitful source of misery, owing to a want of congeniality of disposition and of mutual forbearance. We recognize the opportunity and power of woman for good or evil. The Bible gives the modest, discreet and virtuous woman a high character. The true woman is a precious treasure to her husband and to her family. The man who asks a woman's heart and hand in marriage should duly consider what it means. He asks her to virtually give up everything and to entrust herself to him whom she but imperfectly knows. If he feigns to be what he is not, he deceives the woman and lays the foundation for future misery. In order to have a happy married life it is necessary to begin right, which involves dealing honestly with each other. We counsel young men and

young women to have no secrets which they dare not tell their parents. A daughter who cannot confide her life actions to her mother occupies a dangerous position. Every true man will always deport himself toward woman as he would have others deport themselves to his own sister.

We have thus far been discussing marriage in a general way. We will now treat it as it relates to Christians. He that made them in the beginning, made them male and female, and instituted the marriage relation. Christ referred to the teaching of Moses, saying, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh; and what God hath joined together let no man put asunder." Originally the marriage relation was indissoluble; but after sin entered the world and

hardened the heart the marriage relation was weakened, and the right of separation was granted in certain cases. But when Christ came and restored the Divine life to all those who received Him, the Divine order was again restored and marriage was placed upon its primitive foundation, that of one wife and one husband, without the privilege of divorce, for He said, "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." Interwoven with the subject of marriage as treated by our Savior we find that of regeneration, or the restoration of the lost love and image and kingdom to the soul, by the Holy Spirit. Hence a marriage entered into by Christians is a marriage in the Lord. They live in the Lord. They are the Lord's whether they eat or drink, wake or sleep; for to them to live is Christ. So when they marry they marry in the Lord.

It is quite evident that such marriages should be indissoluble. It is entered into the most solemn plighting of love; it is lived in love and and christian confidence, and cannot be annulled. The idea of a divorce between two Christian persons is an absurdity. It is a true saying that "love worketh no ill to its neighbor," and since a Christian husband and a Christian wife seek to live in love and mutual forbearance, the idea of a divorce is foreign to their mind. The language of Christ upon the subject of divorce is very plain. He positively forbids divorce to Christians, except for the case of adultery, which crime annuls the marriage relation. If a man commits such a crime, a Christian wife has the privilege to divorce him as her husband. She may forgive him upon evidence of repentance and reformation, but the gospel gives

her the right to refuse to be his wife.

Under the Mosaic law, divorce was permitted, as it also is under our civil law; but under the gospel it is not permitted, save for one cause. It was permitted under the law because sin had hardened their hearts, so that love and mutual forbearance were weakened. But in Christ love and forbearance are restored. Divorce was permissible under the law for the same reason that litigation and war were tolerated; but all of these are forbidden to the Christian; or rather because of his restoration to the Christ life, they, and all kindred works became foreign to his spiritual nature.

Although Christians marry in the Lord, they are yet in the body, and are people of like passions as others are. Yet there is a very great difference between them and

the world. They previously to their natural marriage had entered into a marriage relation with Christ, the spiritual Bridegroom. This union with the Heavenly Bridegroom, rises above all other relations, because of its spiritual and eternal nature. It is the mystical union of the soul with Christ. In the natural relation the love and affection of the wife is centered alone in her husband, and she entertains no thought favorable to any other man. So the bride of Christ will not covet the friendship of the world; but will give her whole heart to her spiritual husband and bridegroom. The natural bride loves her husband and so is true and devoted to him. She turns away from a stranger. She knows not the voice of a stranger. She recognizes the very sound of her husband's tread. So the true believers are faithful to their

Spiritual Bridegroom. They know his voice and follow him, but the voice of a stranger they will not hear. Should the natural bride countenance strange voices the bridegroom would cease to own her as his bride. So Christ the Spiritual Bridegroom will not own his bride if she covets the honor of the world or loves anything more than Him. One husband and one wife is the Divine order, as Adam had but one Eve, Abraham but one Sarah, and Isaac but one Rebecca, so Christ has but one church and one bride. Solomon says, "my love, my dove; my undefiled is one, the only one of her mother."

We observed that Christians are people of like passions and impulses with all others, and so will have their trials and temptations as well as others, although they marry in the Lord, yet they may differ much temperamentally; and if they

are not careful and prayerful they may fall into temptation and the bond of love he weakened. One of the first and most important duties on the part of the husband is to consider what is due his wife; what sacrifices she makes in his behalf and what is involved in wife and motherhood. As to her just dues, he should feel that he owes it to her to maintain love and sympathy, and to live with her in moderation, considering her as the weaker vessel.

As it is granted that no woman can fill the place of a wife, unless she is willing at least to a limited extent to deny her herself for her husband's comfort, it justly devolves upon him, as his duty in return to make sacrifices for the comfort and happiness of his wife. In order to have happiness the most intimate relations must exist between husband and wife and there

should be nothing to be concealed from each other. Every act of their life should be mutual. The marriage relation imposes the most sacred and responsible duties upon a wife, along with much suffering and anxiety, and the husband should give evidence of appreciation of her manifold bodily infirmities, and of the care resting upon her; and manifest his appreciation by coming to her assistance and helping her to bear her burden. A wife needs more than bare maintenance. She needs above all else the kindly consideration and the fullest measure of sympathy from her husband.

Since familiarity reveals those unlikely traits of character and disposition, which too many of us possess, there is danger of married people losing the respect that is due from one to the other, and thus hinder the freedom that must

characterize married people in order to live Christian lives. Christian married people (as well as others) are likely to hurt each others feelings, and if they are not careful to talk over their differences and become reconciled, a wall of separation will grow up between them and their prayers will be hindered. It is the duty of the husband and wife to recognize each other as brother and sister in faith, and as members one of another in the spiritual body. If one trespasses against the other they owe the same duty toward each that all members do. They dare not let sin rest upon each other, but must be willing to obey the Scripture in giving and receiving reproof in their relation toward each other, as in the duty of members who are not in the marriage relation. If married people neglect the important duty and

are not communicative with each other, temptations occur, and their prayers are hindered.

The rearing of a family, as it devolves upon married people is a responsible trust. It is a duty to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Parents should show full respect for each other in the presence of their children. They never should allow their children to know of any difference between them, should such occur. In the rearing of a family the father and mother should always labor in harmony. Known differences between them are detrimental to successful discipline in the family.

Marriage under the Gospel, as noted is limited to one man and one woman, and exclusively to believers. The consistency and wisdom of this restriction is apparent to every reflecting mind. Christ-

ian marriage is designed not only for the comfort and well being of the present life, but also for the encouragement and upbuilding of the spiritual life. The wife is designed to be an helpmate for man, both naturally and spiritually. The marriage relation is the most intimate of all earthly relations and on that account affords unusual opportunities for mutual benefit. This is especially so in reference to religion, in which united effort is essential to success. "Can two walk together unless they agree?" And since in union there is strength the manifest necessity of unity in faith and doctrine between husband and wife, in order for spiritual development and growth is apparent. As spiritual progress is paramount to every other consideration, it is but reasonable to conclude that a Christian would desire to form so close a union as that of marriage

only with one of the same faith. This also accords with Scripture testimony. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." "At liberty to marry, ONLY IN THE LORD." Persons cannot marry in the Lord unless they live in the Lord, unless they have saving faith in the Lord Jesus that manifests itself by obedience to all the commandments of the gospel of Christ and the epistles of the Apostles. May goodness and mercy follow all sincere persons whether married or unmarried during all the days of their earthly sojourn and may they ever be able to say, "I will abide in the House of the Lord forever."