

SOME PASTORAL COUNSEL ON MARRIAGE

GOD Himself performed the first marriage ceremony, by simply bringing together our first parents, Adam and Eve. Mother Eve was already bone of Adam's bone, and flesh of his flesh, but the two had been separated by God Himself. They were two in body, but one in heart; for He purposed that the entire race should be born from this one pair, in order that when sin should enter and involve the whole human family, the death of one person would suffice to redeem the entire race. "By man came death; by man also came the resurrection of the dead. – 1 Cor. 15:21; Rom. 5:12,19.

The Bible clearly teaches that, when the great Plan of God shall be completed by bringing Restitution to the world, this Restitution will bring humanity to that condition in which Adam was previous to the separation of the woman from him. And so we have the words of Jesus to the effect that "Those deemed worthy to obtain that Age, and that resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, because they are like the angels." (Luke 20:35.) In other words, in the Times of Restitution, males and females will all lose their distinctive features, and become again as Adam was in the beginning – each complete in himself – when the earth shall be filled with people. God does not design to over-fill the earth, but simply to fill it.

But while the union of man and woman is a matter of love between themselves, the Law steps in and says that there must be suitable regulations and some formal way of authorizing their union before others as witnesses, so as to avoid trouble in the future. Consequently there are certain specifications regarding licenses, etc., all of which we believe is quite proper.

A SPECIAL MEANING IN MARRIAGE

However, as Christian people who have the Word of God, and who as Bible students have come to some appreciation of that Word, we see in marriage a special meaning which God purposed when instituting the rite. Marriage between man and woman is a picture, or illustration, of the union to take place between Christ and the Church; and God so ordained that it should be. The Apostle in referring to marriage as a picture, goes on to say that as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, so also should men love their wives as their own body. – Ephesians 5:25-32.

Great love is this – that a man should do for his wife what he would do for himself! So Christ did all this for His Body, the Church. He did even more than this – He laid down His life for us. This should further suggest that husbands should lay down their lives for their wives, and consequently should provide not only for her food and clothes, but for her mental and moral interests as well. These should all come under the care of the husband; and a good husband should see that his wife is well cared for, even at the sacrifice of some things for himself, as circumstances might suggest.

Then, turning to the other side of the matter, the Apostle says that as the Church reverences her Lord, so should wives reverence their husbands. Only as mankind has caught the spirit of this Divine lesson, only in that proportion do they understand how to get the best out of life. Those who follow strictly the Lord's arrangements get the most out of the marriage relation. The husband who loves his wife to the neglect of his own preference at times is the one who is likely to be appreciated most; and the wife who does what she can to serve her husband's interest and is devoted to him is an illustration of what the Church does for her Lord.

In this statement we are not undertaking to contradict the Apostle when he says, "He that marrieth doeth well, but he that marrieth not doeth better." (1 Corinthians 7:38.) He is not here addressing the

world, but those who have devoted their lives to the Lord. If their marriage would not interfere with their consecration to the Lord, then they might marry. If it would interfere with their consecration, then for them to marry would be putting a mortgage on their lives. But there are cases in which both brethren and sisters have been benefited by marriage, not only personally, but in their relationship to the Lord and others.

We would not be understood to mean that those who marry are going contrary to the Lord. All who desire to please the Lord should be very careful in such a matter, however; and others should not attempt to criticize those who marry. This is the liberty with which God has made us free; and this is the liberty which we should both maintain for ourselves and grant to others.

"FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE"

Those who marry should have in consideration the fact that they are probably not marrying a person who is perfect; for the Bible tells us that "there is none perfect, no, not one." Neither one is perfect; and for one who is imperfect to ask that another shall be perfect, when neither one is or can be perfect, is manifestly wrong. However, each should endeavor to cover up his own weaknesses. There are those who are unwise in this matter. Our minds being perfect, we should live up to that high standard of mind as nearly as we can. We should hide every defect as quickly as possible, that there be no hindrance. It would be a mistake to think, when one is entering into marriage, that he is marrying somebody who is perfect. He has kept back his weakness from the other, and that one has kept back her weakness from him; and well might it be that they keep back their weaknesses throughout life.

The married should not inquire into the things of each other's past; for at the moment of the marriage each takes the other for better or for worse; there should be no looking back. So it is when the Lord accepts us; He does not go back to make investigations. Neither

should we. If married couples should find that there are difficulties, they should not permit any one to interfere between them by endeavoring to straighten out their difficulties for them; for all such attempts make trouble. What God has joined together, let no one attempt to interfere with. Marital difficulties invariably cause a great deal of talk; and knowing this, we should be on guard lest we should do anything to increase difficulties in the lives of others. We are not even to sympathize. We are to leave them alone. Give them advice whenever they ask for it, but do not interfere. After they have married, it is for better or worse as long as they live.

So, then, marriage is a serious matter, and should be undertaken only after serious consideration. It is a very sacred obligation. The contracting parties bind themselves for the remainder of life. All marriages would be more satisfactory if this thought were fully appreciated and followed.

"Master, speak! and make me ready,
As Thy voice is daily heard,
With obedience glad and steady
Still to follow every word.
I am listening, Lord, for Thee:
Master, speak, speak on, to me!"

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