

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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(i) HONOUR IN MARRIAGE

Eric Burr

Hebrews 13: 4; 1 Peter 3: 5-7; Ephesians 6: 1,2

I refer to these scriptures as bearing on the way in which honour enters into marriage. As to marriage generally, one might wish that it was unnecessary to speak about this, but publicly it becomes more and more important that the honour of marriage should not only be understood but should be practised. The writer of the epistle to Hebrews says "let marriage be held every way in honour". The words are simple, (a great deal of the Bible is written in very simple language so that it is very easy to us all to understand: some of it requires no interpretation at all) but the very idea that marriage be held every way in honour is something that should be in the spirits and minds of us all. It applies, of course, immediately, to those who are married as our beloved brother and sister are today. But they will hold their marriage in honour.

If however we look at the translator's note we will see that it is not only to be held in honour by those who are in the bond of marriage, but the idea of marriage is to be held in honour. That is a side of things from which much is detracted in the world at the present time - but not amongst Christian people: marriage is to be held every way in honour. This has a great deal to do with marriage relationships. It has also to do with the way in which we regard the marriage of other people, so that those who hold marriage in every way in honour never think of trespassing into the marriage of somebody else or of trespassing outside their own. We see the way in which marriage has been corrupted in the world because it has not been held in honour; and that marriages break down because marriage is not held in honour. I am not now speaking about the partners, I am speaking about others who may intrude into it. But marriage of others is to be held every way in honour. Nobody is to trespass into a marriage.

The scripture in Peter bears on the way in which those who are married hold each other in honour. The word is not actually used in relation to the wife. It speaks of Sarah (going back to the Old Testament) and says that she regarded Abraham who was her husband, "calling him lord" (v 6). That shows that she held him in honour. She held her husband in honour, she called him lord. Now it is probably not necessary for me to say here that that does not mean that he was in a kind of authoritative, dominating position in regard to her, but she called him lord. She held him in honour. We who are husbands would, I think, be humble enough to say that we may sometimes fall from a right to claim that kind of esteem but the reminder is there in Scripture that that is the way in which husbands are to hold themselves, so that their wives may honour them. I do not therefore speak about subjection because, if there is honour paid, subjection will follow and the subjection that follows will be the subjection of respect. That is what is required. Subjection without respect is useless but the wife obeys her husband - is subject to her husband, calling him lord. That is to say, she holds her husband in honour. All of us who know her are confident as to our sister that she will hold her husband in honour. I suppose our brother would not mind my saying that one purpose of the word of the Lord on an occasion like this is that he should hold himself so that he merits the honour of his wife.

And then as to husbands, regarding their wives, it actually uses the word honour; it says "husbands likewise, dwell with them" (that is your wives) "according to knowledge, as with a weaker, even the female, vessel, giving them honour" (v 7). That is to say, the husbands give their wives honour. It involves treating wives with respect in every circumstance that arises in marriage - another area perhaps in which marriage is not up to the divine standard in the present day - but as Peter says (and he himself was married) "giving them honour". This is the way in which husbands are to regard their wives, giving them honour. Sometimes what you read in Scripture surprises you a bit but that is what it says. It says "giving them honour"; "dwell with them according to knowledge, as with a weaker,

even the female, vessel, giving them honour, as also fellow heirs of the grace of life". That is the way in which honour works within the marriage relationship as between husband and wife.

Now I read the verses in Ephesians (not that our beloved brother and sister, at the moment, have children) for this purpose, that the idea of honour stretches down to the children. "Honour thy father and thy mother". Now if marriage is held every way in honour and husbands and wives hold each other in honour, the children will learn that the home is a sphere of honour, and thus the children will learn to honour their father and their mother. Thus we can see from these scriptures that the whole environment of marriage is coloured by the thought of honour. I commend that. It is only newly that these scriptures and their connections together have come to me, but I commend this thought to all, that all of us hold marriage in every way in honour - whether our own or that of anybody else, we hold marriage in honour - and that wives hold their husbands in honour and husbands hold their wives in honour. Indeed it says "giving them honour". There is something to be communicated from one to the other and the children: "honour thy father and thy mother". A home marked by honour will always be an attractive place in which to live, an attractive place to visit, an attractive place where the name of the Lord Jesus will be held in distinctiveness and those who live there will honour Him above all things. It says in the Old Testament "Honour Jehovah with thy substance", Prov 3: 9. That is the way in which the house is held.

Well beloved I commend this thought to us all, not only to our beloved brother and sister - we know them and we have confidence in them; we are here for the sake of a blessing on them on a day like this. But I commend the thought to us all that marriage is to be held every way in honour. I say again that the marriage tie, our own or anybody else's, husbands for wives and wives for husbands and children to parents, is to be characterised by honour. May the Lord help us all as to it.

(ii) "TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE"

Leslie McFarlane

Genesis 2: 18,23; Ecclesiastes 4: 9-13

I trust what is to be said will be understood by us all, dear friends.

We are speaking of the things related to God, the purpose of God for His creature man. We know something of the history of the creation. God wrought in the beginning by His word all that is seen around us; and then finally man was introduced. God created man in His image and likeness. It was very pleasing to God, Jehovah Elohim - alluding, I believe, to all three divine Persons, who had to do with the formation of man. But in the scripture we read it is said "Jehovah Elohim said, it is not good that man should be al one".

Jehovah observed the man, He saw him there every day; and, speaking reverently, He concluded that man needed help. He needed an answer to his affection. It is good to come to that impression as an individual - a solitary individual - that you need help. God, in his gracious thoughts for His creature, said He would make him a helpmate his like. This is an important point in the marriage bond, that the marriage is in the Lord. The apostle Paul says let them marry "only in the Lord", 1 Cor 7: 39. Our dear brother and sister have made this decision to be here for the Lord as individuals. The scripture says that two are better than one. God had in view no doubt the thought of the household, the marriage bond, where the two would become one. Paul speaks of Christ and the assembly, the great mystery, that the two become one.

Now this is to be worked out in a practical sense in the believer's household, that two persons as joined in marriage are to be governed by one will; that is, the will of God is to take precedence over our own will. The dear wife is to be subject to her husband and the husband is exhorted to dwell with his wife according to knowledge. So that patience, forbearance and love will predominate in the household. All this relates to what was in the mind of God for His creature, that there should be this oneness - oneness of thought, oneness of outlook, oneness in relation to the testimony here. The household is set up to have this in view. The Lord Jesus said "where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them", Matt 18: 20. So in the marriage bond we have the nucleus of a local assembly. The Lord Jesus would honour two godly persons in any place as seeking to represent Him here in testimony.

I go on to Ecclesiastes, one of the books of Solomon. In the beginning of the book it says that the preacher was king in Jerusalem - "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem". Now the footnote to the word "preacher" is 'a former of assemblies'. This great man Solomon says some very good things. I would commend this book that we all read it. They are the words of a very wise man. So he says where I read that "Two are better than one". God takes account of our individual histories, our individual faithfulness, but it is to be strengthened. The part of the household in Christianity is a very important factor. God operates household-wise in relation to a man and his wife. brother and sister, and the children. So they are better than one. It says "For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow". But this has to be worked out in a practical sense in the household, where each individual has the interest of the other. Difficulties might well come into the household at times and there is to be this affectionate side that the one is always thinking of the other.

All this is to follow on what our beloved brother has already brought before us. Then it goes on to say that "if two lie together, then they have warmth". This is suggestive, dear friends, of love,

the divine nature - love - finding expression in the marital bond. The idea of warmth in the household is an important matter - hospitality and warmth. So it says here that it is necessary to have two to have this warmth. It says "how can one alone be warm?". And it goes on to say: "if a man overpower the one, the two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not easily broken", suggesting to us, no doubt, that our Lord Jesus should always have the first place in all our endeavours. Then there is the love of God coming into it so that things are maintained. May the Lord Jesus bless the word.

(iii) CHRIST AND THE ASSEMBLY

Joseph Desai

Romans 16: 25-27

Dear friends, I seek to be brief. We have had two helpful words bearing on the pattern of what is in view in every wedding, that is, Christ and the assembly. Our brother in his opening prayer referred to the first thing that God gave man - a wife. Our brother who gave the second word said that God was mindful of man, He was mindful of the fact that man needed help. Now many a man would not like to accept that fact because man likes to be independent, self-sufficient; he likes to show that he can look after himself, but this is the divine arrangement. Man needed a helpmate and the all-wise God, the Creator, knew from the very outset that man needed help. So He provided a helpmate. Now friends, the beauty of the truth is that this person who was to be the helpmate was taken out of the man. Man was made of the dust, but the woman, in that sense, is made of a better substance because she was taken out of the man. There is not time to go into all the detail but what we have in Genesis 2 which our brother read gives us a beautiful type of Christ and the assembly. Eve is a beautiful type of the assembly which comes on to view before the entrance of sin into the world. So that is how we are to view marriage. Our brother spoke about how marriage has been corrupted in the world, but God Himself instituted marriage before the entrance of sin into the world. That is mystery. Paul in writing speaks of many things but one is special: he says "I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly", Eph 5: 32. It is a great mystery; many people fail to see it, but it is open to even the simplest believer to understand. You do not need to be greatly educated, you do not have to go to a theological college to understand it. All you need is the Holy Spirit, and it is in the power of the Holy Spirit that you can understand the mystery. That is Paul's preaching. So I had this thought of the special character of Paul's preaching. If you go to Paul you get a great many things opened out as to Christ and the assembly.

So in this passage we read you find "the mystery, as to which silence has been kept in the times of the ages". But God has come

out. This is not the time of silence. This is the Christian era in which things have been made known. Everything is in full supply. We are living in a very favourable time. We are living in the best time. God would appeal to us that we appropriate the truth in its full bearing.

Many preach the forgiveness of sins but God has greater things in mind for man. That is what He is saying: conformity to Christ, the Man in glory. That is what God is offering to every man in the gospel - conformity to Christ. And the assembly which will be united to Christ will be derived from Christ; it will have the features of Christ.

Nothing short of that can be united to Christ. But marriage in a typical sense is patterned after that truth - Christ and the assembly.

Now the Lord would give us a touch as to that, and that is what the apostle says here: "as to which silence has been kept in the times of the ages, but which has now been made manifest, and by prophetic scriptures, according to the commandment of the eternal God, made known for obedience of faith to all the nations". Well, we all can embrace that, dear friends; we all can embrace it by obedience of faith. God is offering to man the best of things. It is being preached. It has been preached for nearly 2000 years and it is being preached now. Christ will soon come and it will no longer be preached, when the church is taken to be with Christ in glory for ever. That time is just at the door. This dispensation will soon come to a close but, in the meantime, God would appeal to us. Embrace it in faith! Obey it in faith! Make it your own! That is what He would tell you now. It is preached for obedience of faith to all the nations - no exclusions. All are included; God would not exclude anyone. No one is excluded, whoever you are dear friend - rich, poor, educated, un-educated, whatever your background may be, whatever your religion so far - it makes no difference, it is to all. God is liberal; He is the God of all.

He is the Creator; He is offering the best of things. And then the apostle ends in a doxology: there is praise to God. He says: "the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever.

Amen". The only wise God: what we are offering dear friend! You can make it your own right now, just as you are sitting there! Just accept it in faith, the obedience of faith. Well, that is the word. May God bless it for His Name's sake.

BOMBAY

15 September 1988

"BY RACHEL'S SEPULCHRE"

F.C.Mutton

1 Samuel 10: 1,2 (first half); Genesis 35: 16-20

This was a divine arrangement in 1 Samuel 10 in the early history of Saul, and it is remarkable that Saul, when he went from Samuel, was to meet two men by Rachel's sepulchre. It bears in on me, dear brethren, that the Lord would meet us today and speak to us, we might say, by the sepulchre of our sister. I have no doubt that the Lord, when we are impressionable, when our hearts are softened I trust, would take advantage of such an occasion in a peculiar way, to say something to us by way of direction, using the appeal of the life of the one whom He has taken to affect us. This setting should have appealed to Saul, because he was a Benjaminite. It surely would have affected him to think of Rachel's death - a peculiarly moving incident in that family history, how that beloved woman died but in her death was fruitful. And that is our desire and expectation. Our sister's life has been fruitful, but may her death be fruitful, may our meeting today at her sepulchre be fruitful. I am sure that the Lord would desire to work with us at this time, those of us who remain, and perhaps in a special way with our beloved younger brethren. The Lord has spoken to us on this line a good deal recently, that in a succeeding generation the excellent features that we have valued in those who have gone before may be perpetuated in devotion and in power until the Lord comes.

Our brother has spoken of our sister as a believer in the Lord Jesus; we can say she was a sister of rock-like faith in her Lord and Saviour, and committed to the truth of Christ and the assembly. Oh may we perpetuate that, beloved, in our own lives! May there be fresh resolves as we stand by her sepulchre.

I just wish to draw attention to two other features that have marked our sister. One is, that she has been a helper and succourer of many. This raises the matter of our spiritual and moral influence, what it is during our lives, and what it might have produced if the

Lord takes us, that there should be a generation, some abiding result, as was seen in Benjamin. What a precious typical expression of Christ there was seen in Benjamin. It was the fruit of the way Rachel went.

Another feature that marked our sister was her intelligence in the truth. If I may say so simply, she was a great reader. Some might say they are not great readers but, beloved, let us go in for the precious truth, the rich heritage which is ours. Our sister was addicted to it. I think that one of our greatest needs, especially for the rising generation, is to be addicted to reading. "Give thyself to reading", Paul says to Timothy (1 Tim 4: 13).

I just express these exercises, feeling that as we are by our sister's sepulchre the Lord would say, 'I desire that what I have secured in the one I have taken be continued in those who remain'. The Lord grant that it may be so, for His Name's sake.

COLCHESTER

15 September 1988

THE LOVE OF JESUS

Henry Hutson

John 13: 1; Revelation 3: 19 to "love", 9 from "behold, I will cause"

I was just thinking over the reference in prayer to the words of the hymn 'the thoughts of Jesus' love' (No.213). How many thoughts there are, how many references in the Scriptures to the love of Jesus. There are other references in this well-known gospel. Think of chapter 11, think of the disciple whom He loved. It came to mind particularly that His love remained unchanged when He knew that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world. One has often wondered about the order of the words "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end". The love was there;

He had loved this company, and by extension it extended to all those who were His own, as He says in chapter 17: 20: "those who believe on me through their word". Having loved them, now knowing that His time had come, He did not change His love. It reads that way, I think - "loved them to the end". As Mr Darby says in the note, it implies going through with everything. What that meant for Him we shall never really know, what it meant for Him to go through everything, everything that was involved from that point on in relation to the will of God that we might be secured, involving as He says in chapter 15: 13 that He should "lay down his life for his friends". There is no greater love than the love of Jesus.

Then these thoughts in chapter 3 of the Revelation bring to mind that there is a good deal of discipline and pressure. We were reminded last week of the way it affects both old and young. In the way it affects those who are very young, they are not exactly themselves the subjects of discipline, but the beloved parents and grandparents, and others who have particular interest and care for them, feel the pressure of the discipline upon their spirits, and we have this assurance that it is in His love, that He does it to as many as He loves. What a comfort that is! It is apparently the love of attraction. There were even those in this declining state of the church who were attractive to Jesus. How precious that is! We can look around and know that wherever there is love for Jesus it is attractive to Him, and we would desire that it might be stimulated and quickened into the expression of that of which we have sung, the longing eyes and the desire to see Him face to face. One thought, as far as we are concerned, the outshining of His glory will be the knowledge of His love. In relation to the world it will be the outshining of all that is due to Him, the expression of the power and the glory that are rightly His and the honour that is due to His name.

But as we think of His outshining in relation to those who shall have their part with Him, I believe that in a peculiar way it will be the outshining of His love, and the blessed knowledge of it in which we can rest. May our hearts be encouraged with a fresh impression of the fulness and the depth of the love of Jesus, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

12 July 1988

THE CHILDREN'S WINDOWS

The youngest children will be familiar with the use of windows. They are a means of letting into our rooms the light and warmth which we need and also allow for the circulation of fresh air. They do not in themselves add to these benefits. Thus our faith is a God-given window to us for heavenly blessings to our souls, but it does not exactly add to them. The sun of divine grace and love shines brightly for everybody and is enjoyed by "whosoever" will open the window of his or her heart to receive its beams. Sometimes we may wonder if our faith is sufficient for our salvation and blessing, but if we appreciate God's grace in Christ and rejoice therein as the only thing that can meet the needs of our souls, we may be at rest.

Light can also shine out of a window! I remember reading of a man who was lost in darkness and storm. Without realising it he was in danger of a very serious fall but just at that moment a light shone out from a nearby mansion. This was bright enough to reveal to him his danger but also to save him from it. His one thought was to go to the mansion and see who it was who had been the means of his salvation. Thus, heaven's object in the shining out of the gospel is that sinners in mortal danger should not only be saved but should, in spirit, come to know God as Father in His own heavenly home. The first and last Books of the Old Testament refer to the windows of heaven being opened. Sad to say, wickedness was so great of old that judgment of the whole world must take place, and the windows of heaven were opened in a flood of waters. The few who were saved with Noah were saved through the very waters of judgment which bore up the ark in which they were as their appointed means of salvation. The work of the Lord Jesus in bearing the penalty of

death is today the God-appointed means of salvation for the obedient believer. The prophet Malachi, many years later, was sent to tell God's failing but longed-for people that they should bring into His treasure-house the corn and other fruits due to Him. These really spoke of the future fruitfulness of the Lord Jesus in risen life.

God would then open the windows of heaven and "pour you out a blessing till there be no place for it". He said, "prove me now". Have you done so?

J.C.Evershed