

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 241

A HUSBAND'S LOVE

*Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ also
loved the church.*

Ephesians 5:25

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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241

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Published by Chapel Library • 2603 West Wright St. • Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA

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IT BEGAN IN A GARDEN

Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.—Genesis 2:21-25

HERE we have the making of the woman to be a help meet¹ for Adam. This was done upon the sixth day, as was also the placing of Adam in paradise, though it is here mentioned after an account of the seventh day's rest; but what was said in general (Gen 1:27), that God made man male and female, is more distinctly related here.

Observe, (1) That Adam was first formed, then Eve (1Ti 2:13); and she was made *of* the man and *for* the man (1Co 11:8-9), all which are urged there as reasons for the humility, modesty, silence, and submissiveness of that sex in general, and particularly the [submission] and reverence² that wives owe to their own husbands. Yet man being made last of the creatures, as the best and most excellent of all, Eve's being made *after* Adam and *out* of him puts an honor upon that sex as the glory of the man (1Co 11:7). If man is the head, she is the crown—a crown to her husband, the crown of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double-refined, one remove further from the earth.

(2) That Adam slept while his wife was in making, [so] that no room might be left to imagine that he had herein directed the Spirit

¹ **help meet** – suitable helper; the Hebrew phrase translated by the English *an help meet for him* literally means “like opposite him,” that is, “a helper matching him or suitable for him.” “It seems to express the notion of complementarity rather than identity. As Delitzsch (1:140) observes, if identity were meant, the more natural phrase would be ‘like him’...The help looked for is not just assistance in his daily work or in the procreation of children, though these aspects may be included, but the mutual support companionship provides.” (Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis*, Vol. 1, 68) The relationship between husband and wife, then, should be king and queen, not master and slave. EDITOR'S NOTE: Throughout the remainder of this article *suitable* replaces *meet*.

² **reverence** – deep respect.

of the Lord or [had] been His counsellor (Isa 40:13). He had been made sensible of his need of a suitable help; but, God having undertaken to provide him one, he does not afflict himself with any care about it, but lies down and sleeps sweetly as one that had cast all his care on God with a cheerful resignation of himself and all his affairs to his Maker's will and wisdom. Jehovah-jireh,³ let the Lord provide when and whom He pleases. If we graciously rest in God, God will graciously work for us and work all for good.

(3) That God caused a sleep to fall on Adam and made it a deep sleep so that the opening of his side might be no grievance to him. While he knows no sin, God will take care [that] he shall feel no pain. When God, by His providence, does that to His people, which is grievous to flesh and blood, He not only consults their happiness in the issue, but by His grace He can so quiet and compose their spirits as to make them easy under the sharpest operations.

(4) That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam, not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved. Adam lost a rib without any diminution⁴ to his strength or comeliness (for, doubtless, the flesh was closed without a scar). But in lieu⁵ thereof, he had a help suitable for him, which abundantly made up his loss: what God takes away from His people, He will one way or other restore with advantage. In this (as in many other things), Adam was a figure of Him that was to come; for out of the side of Christ, the second Adam, His spouse the church was formed, when He slept the sleep, the deep sleep of death upon the cross in order to which His side was opened, and there came out blood and water—blood to purchase His church and water to purify it to Himself (Eph 5:25-26).

The marriage⁶ of the woman to Adam: Marriage is honorable, but this surely was the most honorable marriage that ever was, [for] God Himself all along had an immediate hand [in it]. Marriages, they say, are made in heaven: we are sure this was, for the man, the woman, the match, were all God's own work. He, by His power, made them *both* and now, by His ordinance, made them *one*. This was a marriage

³ **Jehovah-jireh** – “the Lord sees” or “the Lord provides”; this is the name that Abraham gave the place on Mt. Moriah where God substituted a ram for a sacrifice, instead of Abraham's son Isaac (Gen 22:14).

⁴ **diminution** – reduction.

⁵ **in lieu** – in the place; instead.

⁶ See FGB 200, *Marriage*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

made in perfect innocence, and so was never any marriage since.

(1) God, as *her* Father, brought the woman to the man as his second self and a help meet for him. When He had made her, He did not leave her to her own disposal; no, she was His child, and she must not marry without His consent. Those are likely to settle to their comfort who by faith, prayer, and a humble dependence upon providence, put themselves under a divine conduct.⁷ The wife that is of God's making by special grace and of God's bringing by special providence is likely to prove a help meet for a man.

(2) From God, as *his* Father, Adam received her: "This is now bone of my bone. Now I have what I wanted and which all the creatures could not furnish me with—a help suitable for me." God's gifts to us are to be received with a humble, thankful acknowledgment of His wisdom in suiting them to us and His favor in bestowing them on us. It was probably revealed to Adam in a vision when he was asleep that this lovely creature, now presented to him, was a piece of himself and was to be his companion and the wife of his covenant...Further, in token of his acceptance of her, he gave her a name, not peculiar to her, but common to her sex: "*She shall be called Woman*"—*'ishshah*⁸—differing from man in sex only, not in [human] nature—made of man and joined to man.

The institution of the ordinance of marriage and the settling of the law of it: The sabbath⁹ and marriage were two ordinances instituted in innocence, the former for the preservation of the church, the latter for the preservation of the world of mankind. It appears that God Himself said here, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (Mat 19:4-5); but whether He spoke it by Moses the penman or by Adam (who spoke, 2:23) is uncertain. It seems they are the words of Adam, in God's name, laying down this law to all his posterity.

(1) See here how great the virtue of a divine ordinance is: the bonds of it are stronger even than those of nature. To whom can we be more firmly bound than the fathers that begat us and the mothers that bore us? Yet the son must quit them to be joined to his wife and the

⁷ **conduct** – guidance.

⁸ *'ishshah* – the most common Hebrew word for *woman* and *wife* in the Old Testament. [Genesis] 2:23 is "of fundamental importance because on the one hand here, *'ish* (man) is used for the first time in this narrative; and on the other hand, *'ishshah* (woman) is explained, indeed one may even say, is defined here...he is *'ish*, and she is *'ishshah*." (Botterweck and Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 226)

⁹ See FGB 233, *The Lord's Day*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

daughter forget them to cleave to her husband (Psa 45:10-11).

(2) See how necessary it is that children should take their parents' consent along with them in their marriage, and how unjust those are to their parents, as well as undutiful, who marry without it. For they rob them of their right to them and interest in them, and alienate it to another fraudulently and unnaturally.

(3) See what need there is both of prudence¹⁰ and prayer in the choice of this relation, which is so near and so lasting. That had need be well done that is to be done for life.

(4) See how firm the bond of marriage is: [it is] not to be divided and weakened by having many wives (Mal 2:15) nor to be broken or cut off by divorce for any cause but fornication or voluntary desertion.¹¹

(5) See how dear the affection ought to be between husband and wife, such as there is to our own bodies (Eph 5:28). These two are one flesh; let them then be one soul.

From *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*,
in the public domain.

Matthew Henry (1662-1714): Presbyterian preacher, author, and commentator; born at Broad Oak, Flintshire, Wales, UK.



This affection of love is a distinct duty in itself, especially belonging to a husband and also a common condition that must be joined to every other duty of a husband to season and sweeten them. His look, his speech, his conduct, and all his actions in which he has to do with his wife must be seasoned with love. Love must show itself in his commandments, in his reproofs, in his instructions, in his admonitions,¹² in his authority, in his familiarity¹³—when they are alone together, when they are in company before others, in civil affairs, in religious matters, at all times, in all things. As salt must be first and last upon the table and eaten with every bit of meat, so must love be first in a husband's heart and last out of it, and mixed with everything in which he has to do with his wife.—*William Gouge*

The formation of the woman out of man showeth how great his affection should be to her, nay, to himself. She was not made of his head to be his sovereign, nor of his feet to be his slave; but of a rib in his side to show how near she should lie to his heart.

—*George Swinnock*

¹⁰ **prudence** – wisdom coupled with caution.

¹¹ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** We understand that not all our readers will agree with the author's view of reasons for divorce.

¹² **admonitions** – cautionary advice or warnings.

¹³ **familiarity** – quality proper to the head of the household.

A CHRISTLIKE LOVE

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,
and gave himself for it.—Ephesians 5:25*

NO husband is entitled to say that he is the head of the wife unless he loves his wife. He is not carrying out the Scriptural injunction¹ unless he does so. These things go together. In other words, it is a manifestation of the Spirit; and the Holy Spirit not only gives power, but He gives love and discipline also. So, as the husband exercises his privilege as the head of the wife and the head of the family, he does so in this way. He is to be controlled always by love, and he is to be controlled by discipline. He must discipline himself. There may be the tendency to dictate, but he must not do so—“power, love, sound mind²” (2Ti 1:7). All that is implicit here in this great word *love*.

So, the reign of the husband is to be a reign and a rule of love; it is a leadership of love. It is not the idea of a pope or a dictator; it is not a case of *ipse dixit*;³ he does not speak *ex cathedra*.⁴ No, it is the power of love, it is the discipline of the Spirit, guarding this power and authority and dignity that are given to the husband. That is clearly the fundamental and the controlling idea in the whole of this matter—“Husbands, love your wives.”

But now we must proceed to consider in general the character or the nature of that love. This, again, is very much needed at the present time. Two things stand out in a glaring manner in the world today: the abuse of the idea of *power* and the still greater abuse of the idea of *love*. The world has never talked so much about love as it does today. But I wonder whether there has ever been a time when there has been less love. These great terms have become so utterly debased⁵ that many people have no idea as to the meaning of the word *love*.

“Husbands, love your wives.” What is this love? Fortunately for us,

¹ **injunction** – command.

² **sound mind** – discipline; self-control.

³ *ipse dixit* – Latin = “he himself said it”; something asserted dogmatically without proof.

⁴ *ex cathedra* – Latin = “from the chair”; when a pope speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, from his seat as bishop, Romanism teaches that his doctrine is infallibly true. This is error.

⁵ **debased** – lowered in quality or value.

the apostle tells us...He says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as”—“even as Christ also loved the church.” Here again, he shows how anxious he is to help us. The very mention of the name of Christ leads him at once to elaborate the statement. He cannot barely say, “even as Christ loved the church”; he must go further and say, “and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” He says all that to help the husband to love his wife as he ought to love his wife.

Why, then, does he elaborate the matter in this way? I believe that there are three main reasons. First, he wants every one of us to know Christ’s great love to us. He wants us to realize the truth about Christ and ourselves and our relationship to Him. Why is he so concerned about this? His argument is clearly this: it is only as we realize the truth about the relationship of Christ to the church that we can really function as Christian husbands ought to function. That this might be clear, he ends by saying, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” But why is he speaking concerning Christ and the church? Why has he led us into that mystery? In order that husbands might know how to love their wives. And that is where the glib⁶ and superficial people who jeer at doctrine show their folly and their ignorance. “Ah,” they say, “those people are only interested in doctrine; we are practical people.” But you cannot be practical without doctrine, you cannot love your wife truly unless you understand something about *this* doctrine, about this great mystery. “Ah,” say others, “it is too difficult; I cannot follow it at all.” But if you want to live as a Christian, you have got to follow it, you have got to apply your mind, you have got to think, you have got to study, you have got to try to understand, you have got to grapple with it. It is here for you; and if you turn your back on this, you are rejecting something God gives you, and you are a terrible sinner. To reject doctrine is a terrible sin. You must never put practice against doctrine because you cannot practice without it. So the apostle takes the trouble to elaborate this wonderful doctrine about the relationship of Christ and the church, not simply for the sake of stating it, important as it is, but in order that you and I at home may love our wives as we ought to love them—“even as Christ loved the church.”

So, we can now look at the problem in the following way: the prin-

⁶ **glib** – lacking intellectual depth.

principle that is to control our practice is that the relationship between husband and wife is the same in essence and in nature as the relationship between Christ and the church. how do we approach it therefore? we must start by studying the relationship between Christ and the church, and then, and then only, can we look at the relationship between the husband and the wife. that is what the apostle is doing. “husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church.” this said, he tells us exactly how Christ has loved the church. then, he says, “go and do the same; that is your rule. that is the first great doctrine.”

We start, then, by considering the relationship of Christ and the church. Here is something that concerns all—not husbands only, but all people. What we are told about the relationship of Christ to the church is true of every single one of us. Christ is the Husband of the church; Christ is the Husband of every single believer. You ask, “Where do you find this teaching?” I find it, for instance, in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 7 verse 4: “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, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” Christ is the Husband of the church; the church is the Bride of Christ. Every one of us can, in that sense, look upon the Lord Jesus Christ as our Husband, and collectively we do so as members of the Christian church.

What does the apostle tell us about this? The first thing he tells us is about the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ to the church, of how He looks upon her. Here is instruction for husbands. What is your attitude? How do you look upon your wife? Just here the apostle tells us some marvelous things. Christian people, have you realized that these things are true about you as members of the Christian church? Look at the characteristics of our Lord’s attitude towards His Bride, the church. He loves her, “even as Christ loved the church.” What an eloquent expression! He loved her despite her unworthiness; He loved her despite her deficiencies. Notice what He has to do for her. She needs to be washed, she needs to be cleansed. He saw her in her rags, in her wildness; but He loved her. That is the height of the doctrine of salvation. He loved us—not because of anything in us. He loved us *despite* what was in us, “while we were yet sinners.” He loved the ungodly, “while we were yet enemies” (Rom 5:8). In all our unworthiness and vileness, He loved us. He loved the church, not because she was glorious and beautiful—no, but that He might make her such. Take note of the doctrine and see what it has to say to husbands. A

husband comes up against deficiencies, difficulties, things he feels he can criticize in his wife; but he is to love her “as Christ loved the church.” That is the kind of love he must show. So much for the first principle.

The second principle is this: “He gave himself for it.” He was not only ready to sacrifice Himself for her. He actually did sacrifice Himself for her. Such is Christ’s love for the church! He could only save her by giving His life for her, and He gave His life. That is the characteristic of His love.

Then, take notice of His great concern for her and for her wellbeing. He is looking at her. He is concerned about her. He sees the possibilities in her, as it were. He desires her to be perfect. That is why Paul goes on to say, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” You see His interest in her, His love for her, His pride in her. Those are the characteristics of Christ’s love to the church—this great desire that she should be perfect. And He is not going to be satisfied until she is perfect. He wants to be able to present her to Himself a glorious church, “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” He wants her to be perfect, beyond criticism. He wants the whole world, as it were, to admire her. So, we were told in the third chapter of this Epistle, in verse 10, that He has done all this “to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” It is this pride of the Bridegroom in His wife: He is proud of her beauty, proud of her appearance, proud of all that pertains to her; and He wants to show her to the family, to all His creatures. That is the sort of relationship that exists between the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. I am extracting the principle out of the details first because they give us an understanding of this wonderful mystical relationship. And so, the picture is of our Lord rejoicing in the relationship—happy in it, triumphant in it, glorying in it. There is nothing that He will not do for His Bride, the church.

Such is the first great matter that emerges in the apostle’s treatment of this vast and exalted subject. We have to start with this picture of Christ and the church. You see how He looks upon her, what He does for her because He looks upon her in that way, what He has in view for her—His ultimate objective. And because of all this, there is the extraordinary concept of the mystical relationship, the unity,

the idea that they are one flesh, and that she is His body. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church.”

There, then, is our first great principle—Christ loving the church. The relationship between Christ and the church is that which should exist between husband and wife. So, start with that. Look at the great doctrine of the church. Come all of you, married and unmarried. This is true of all of us because we are in the church. How wonderful to realize that we are in this relationship to Christ! That is how He looks at you, that is His attitude towards you. The principle is this: this love, this God-like love, is altogether above the erotic and philanthropic⁷ that is the highest the world can know. The great characteristic of this love—and this is where it is essentially different from the others—is that this is not so much governed by the desire to have, as by the desire to give. “God so loved the world.” How? “That He gave.” There is nothing wrong with the other types of love—I have said this previously—but even when you have them at their best, they are always self-centered, they are always thinking of themselves. But the characteristic of this other love is that it does not think of itself. He gave *Himself*; He died for her—“even unto death.” Sacrifice is the characteristic of this love. This love is a love that gives; it is not always considering what it is going to have, but what it may give for the benefit of the other. Husbands, love your wives like *that*, even as Christ loved the church!

From *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home, and Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 132-141, used by permission; www.banneroftruth.org.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): Welsh expository preacher and author; born in Cardiff, Wales, UK.



All things that concern thy wife should be done in love. Thy thoughts should be thoughts of love; thy looks should be looks of love; thy lips, like the honeycomb, should drop nothing but sweetness and love. Thy instructions should be edged with love; thy reprehensions should be sweetened with love; thy carriage and whole conversation towards her should be but the fruit and demonstration of thy love. Oh, how did Christ, Who is thy pattern, love His spouse! His birth, life, and death were but, as it were, a stage whereon the hottest love imaginable, from first to last, acted its part to the life.

—George Swinnock

⁷ **philanthropic** – general love for mankind.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOVE

Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690)

THE duties...of married persons are either special or common. *Special* are those, which are the duties only of one party to the other—either of the husband to the wife or the wife to the husband. *Common* are those, which belong to both and are to be mutually performed by both.

I shall first begin with those duties that belong to a husband towards his wife, and they are these:

(1) **Conjugal¹ love:** Indeed, love is a beautiful ornament to all relations, but it is the foundation and first principle of this. It is love that ought at first to tie the marriage knot; and it is love alone that can afterwards make it easy. No other respect whatsoever can keep it from wringing and galling² us. And, although lack of love cannot dissolve the bond, yet it doth [dissolve] the joy and comfort of a married state. Now, of all the objects that are allowed us to love here on earth, a wife is the chiefest; yea, to be loved above parents, children, friends, and the dearest of all other relations: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife” (Gen 2:24). And, if you would know the full measure of this love, the apostle hath prescribed it: “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies” (Eph 5:28); and, “Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself” (Eph 5:33). You must be as careful and tender of their good as of your own and resent any injury done unto them as much as if it were done unto yourselves. And, indeed, there is great reason for it: for marriage makes of two, [one flesh]. It doth but compensate our damage and restore the rib to our side again. And, therefore, by marriage two are said to be made one flesh: “And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh” (Mar 10:8). Therefore, all violence and outrage against a wife, into which the rude and boisterous fury of some brutish men doth too often break, is as unnatural as if you should see a man beat, wound, and gash himself! And, certainly, they are mad and distracted passions, which take revenge upon themselves: “No man ever yet hated his own flesh,” that is, no man acting rationally and as becomes a man, “but

¹ **conjugal** – marital.

² **wringing and galling** – distressing and irritating.

loveth and cherisheth it” (Eph 5:29). So that we are to love our wives with the same tenderness and naturalness of affection as our own beings; they should be as dear to us as ourselves. And, if you would have this high affection mounted a degree higher, see verse 25: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” If a natural affection will not suffice,³ behold here a supernatural one, the greatest instance of love that ever was expressed or conceived brought to be the rule and pattern of ours. Christ loved the church, His spouse, although there were many spots, blemishes, and imperfections in her. He loved her so, as to leave His Father and cleave to His wife; He loved her, better than Himself and His own life, and shed His most precious blood for her. And, rather than the wrath of God should fall upon His beloved spouse, He thrusts Himself between and receives those heavy blows on His own person. So ought men also to love their wives: so infinitely, if it were possible, but because it is not so, sincerely. And, therefore,

[1] They must love them, though they often bewray⁴ many weaknesses and imperfections. [These] they ought meekly to bear with, though they must not countenance nor encourage them. Love will cover a multitude of faults, and, so long as they are but faults and not crimes, we ought no more to divorce our affections than our persons from them. There is indeed a touchy⁵ love, which will cause great wrath for very small offences; but, usually, such kind of love turns into bitterness and exasperation. Therefore, offences of this nature should be prudently passed by, only with a glancing reproof, or with a silence that shall be more instructive than noise and clamor. Here the apostle exhorts husbands, “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them” (Col 3:19).

[2] We should so love them, as not to upbraid them with the necessities or encumbrances of a married life. But [we should] be content to [diminish] our former freedom and to forego our former privileges, either of plenty or pleasure, which we enjoyed in a single condition, without reproaching them with it. Many fools there are, who fancy nothing but joys and delights in a married life. But, when they enter it and find many unexpected troubles, and that they cannot live either at so much ease or with so much splendor as before, [they] think to right themselves by perpetual brawls with their wives, imputing the cause to them and charging on them all the burdens and incon-

³ **suffice** – be enough.

⁴ **bewray** – unintentionally reveal.

⁵ **touchy** – oversensitive and easily offended.

veniences under which they both labor. And of [these,] the woman commonly hath the greater share! Now this is not to love as Christ loved the church, Who, for her sake, stripped Himself of His glory and voluntarily humbled Himself, first to the dust and then to the death—the cruel and cursed death of the cross.

[3] We ought so to love them as to interpose and step in between them and danger and rather suffer it to fall upon ourselves than upon them. For so Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it—redeeming it from the wrath of God by His own undergoing it and delivering it from death by suffering death for it.

[4] We ought so to love them as to endeavor to promote the spiritual good of their souls and, by good counsels and instructions, insinuate into them the love of piety and holiness. [We should do this so that,] as Christ sanctifieth the church, His spouse, we may also sanctify ours and present them unto God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

In these four things, we are to love our wives even as Christ loved His church: by bearing with and pardoning their weaknesses; by being willing to submit to many inconveniences for their sakes; by interposing ourselves between them and danger; and, lastly, by endeavoring to promote their spiritual good and benefit.

And, [so much for] the first duty, which is *love*. On it, I have insisted longer because it comprehends all other duties. For where there is this sincere and conjugal affection, although it may have different methods of expressing itself according to the different tempers of men, yet it will certainly, in this as in all other cases, command the whole train and retinue⁶ of other affections to wait upon it, and to see that nothing be lacking to the good of the object on which it is fixed. I shall, therefore, be the briefer in the rest.

(2) Another duty of the husband is provident care⁷ for his wife. He ought, saith the apostle, to nourish and cherish her as Christ doth the church (Eph 5:29). He must, therefore, impart unto her, according to his rank and ability, whatsoever may be for her necessity or comfort. [He must] not waste in riot and excess among his lewd and wicked companions—companions that the devil hath given him—that which ought to be for her support, whom God hath given him for his companion, and who, meanwhile, hath nothing to feed on but her sorrows, nothing to drink but her tears...

⁶ **retinue** – line of persons following an important person, which in this case is *love*.

⁷ **provident care** – seeing beforehand and providing for care in the future.

(3) **Another duty that husbands owe their wives is protection from dangers when they are in jeopardy...**Indeed, the weakness and feebleness of that sex, being more helpless in dangers than ours and less able [to raise themselves out of trouble], calls for this ready aid and [help] from us. He, who is so churlish⁸ as not to afford it, is so unnatural as to suffer a part of himself to perish! In Scripture, a wife is compared to a fruitful vine (Psa 128:3): now a vine is a weak, tender plant and requires support, and the husband should be as the house-side for her stay and support. Therefore, woman was at first made of a rib taken from under the man's arm. The office of the arm is to repel and keep off injuries, which signifies unto us that the husband ought to defend his wife from all wrongs and injuries that she may be exposed to.

(4) **Another duty is instruction and direction.** Therefore, the husband is called her *head*—the seat and fountain of knowledge and wisdom: “The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church” (Eph 5:23). Therefore, as all direction and consolation is derived from Christ, so should the husband likewise [hand] down and communicate knowledge, comfort, and guidance to the wife—called, therefore, her *guide* (Pro 2:17). And Peter requires of husbands that they should dwell with their wives “according to knowledge,” to be able to advise and inform them in all emergent cases, especially concerning God and their souls. Whence Paul enjoins wives that, “if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home” (1Co 14:35). Therefore, much more is it required of husbands that they should have laid up a good stock of knowledge and be able to teach them, lest such as “creep into houses, and lead captive silly women” ensnare their wives (2Ti 3:6). For such is the subtlety of deceivers, following therein the method of the Old Serpent: they first begin with the woman and then make use of her to seduce the man. For heresy, as all other sins, does first inveigle⁹ the affections, and then by them corrupts the reason. Therefore, the husband should be well-grounded and principled with knowledge that he may keep his wife from being led away by the crafty subtlety of those who lie in wait to deceive, those who by good words and fair speeches, affected phrases and jingling expressions that have nothing in them but sound and error, pervert the hearts of the simple. But if, as it sometimes happens, God hath endowed the wife with a greater measure of prudence and solid, substantial knowledge than the husband, it is then his part to hearken to her advice and to yield not, indeed, to the authority of the *coun-*

⁸ **churlish** – unkind and grumpy; rude in a mean-spirited way.

⁹ **inveigle** – persuade by cleverness or trickery; seduce.

sellor (his wife), as she is bound to do, but to the authority of the *counsel* (the Scriptures). This she ought to [offer] him with all respect and submission, not having power to enjoin¹⁰ what she knows to be best and fittest, but only with modesty propounding¹¹ it and with meekness persuading him to embrace it.

(5) Another duty of the husband is tenderness and mildness towards his wife, not causelessly grieving her either by speeches or actions. That is a wretched family, where those who are joined in the same yoke spurn and kick at one another. If the wife be careful in performing her duty, there belongs to her a kind and loving acceptance of it and praise and commendation for it. If she sometimes should fail, she ought not to be rebuked with bitterness, but with meekness and in such a way as the reproof should show more sorrow than anger. But perpetual brawling and contention, besides that they wholly embitter this state of life and eat out all the comfort of it instead of preventing offences for the future, do usually provoke and exasperate to more! [They] are perhaps a greater fault in the husband than that which he exclaims at in his wife. Besides, it will certainly indispose them both to the performance of those duties that belong unto them in their general and particular callings [as husband and wife]. It will hinder their prayers: for how can they lift up their hands without wrath, as the apostle commands (1Ti 2:8), when they burn in [anger] one against the other? How can they pray to God for blessings upon each other, when they have been cursing and reviling each other? And, as for the duties of their particular callings, do we not see that in those families where this baneful¹² contention reigns, they are commonly neglected. All runs to wreck and ruin out of a kind of revenge that one party thinks to take upon the other. The husband, out of discontent, will not provide nor the wife manage. So, nothing is cared for, but only how they may quarrel and rail at each other—a misery that many families fall into through the indiscreet heats and fierceness of the man upon every trivial offence of the wife...

(6) Another duty of the husband is to give due respect and honor unto his wife. Give “honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel” (1Pe 3:7); for, being weak, she ought to be [treated] with the more respect and gentleness. Think honorably of her as the person whom God saw best and fittest for you in all the world; and be not tempted, so much as in a thought, to believe that any other could have been

¹⁰ **enjoin** – authoritatively command.

¹¹ **propounding** – putting forward for consideration.

¹² **baneful** – exceedingly harmful.

either so proper or so beneficial unto you. Speak honorably of her, not divulging any of her failings and imperfections to her discredit; but giving her the due praise of those virtues and graces that are in her. For he that disgraceth his wife disparageth himself; and everyone will censure him as guilty of folly, either in choosing or in governing her. Treat her honorably, neither making thyself a servant to her [moods], for that will dishonor thee; nor making her a slave to thine, for that is to dishonor her. But treat her as thy bosom-friend, thy endeared companion, and, in everything but authority, equal to thyself.

(7) **The last duty of a husband is prudent maintaining and managing of his authority.** His authority over his wife is God's, Who hath entrusted him with it. Our Savior illustrates His own authority over the church by the authority of a husband over his wife (Eph 5). And, therefore, it is not basely to be betrayed nor to be maintained with rigor and a tyrannical violence. But the right and most effectual way of keeping up this authority is by prudence and gravity, by [self-control and godliness], and a [dignified], exemplary, and [disciplined] life. This will cause a reverent esteem and veneration in the wife and in the whole family; whereas lightness at one time and severity at another will but expose us to contempt for the one and hatred for the other. It is hard for him to be respected by others, who doth not first respect himself; for he that will prostitute¹³ himself by foolish and ridiculous [moods], or by vile and wicked actions—injustice, intemperance, lying, etc.—must fall under the scorn of his nearest relations!...But an excellent mixture of prudence and godliness together—the one to be a *guide* and the other to be an *example*—will make a man truly awe-inspiring and worthy of profound respect, and [will] induce the wife and the whole family to esteem and to imitate him. [So much] for the duties of the husband towards the wife.

From “An Exposition of the Ten Commandments” in *The Works of Ezekiel Hopkins*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The Leighton Publications, 1868), 464-470, in the public domain.

Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690): Anglican minister and author; born in Sandford, Crediton, Devonshire, UK.



Now, how did Christ love His church? With a great love, so as to die for His church.—*Thomas Manton*

¹³ **prostitute** – expose oneself to public shame in a degrading manner.

AS CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH

John Angell James (1785-1859)

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,
and gave himself for it.—Ephesians 5:25*

OBSERVE the sublime and transcendently interesting¹ fact that stands amidst the duties of domestic life, as stated by the apostle in the language quoted above, like the sun in the center of the planets—illuminating, impelling, and uniting them all. Every part of this most comprehensive and beautiful passage is inimitably² striking. The design of the whole is to magnify Christ's love to the church; [regarding] this, the moral condition of the church, previous to the transforming work of redeeming grace, is supposed to be that of loathsome impurity; yet, notwithstanding this, He exercises the most tender compassion for her welfare and is not repelled by excessive defilement.

To effect her redemption, [Jesus] does not merely employ the operations of His power and of His wisdom, but surrendered Himself into the hands of divine justice that, as a sacrifice of atonement,³ He might ransom the object of His regard at the price of His blood. [In this, He manifested] an affection stronger than death, and “which many waters cannot quench” (Song 8:7). The ultimate design of this act of mysterious humiliation is to render her in some measure worthy of His regard and fit for that indissoluble union with Himself into which, as His illustrious bride, she was about to be received.

For this purpose, the efficient influences of the Holy Ghost were to be poured upon her mind that in the cordial⁴ reception of the truth, she might be purified from iniquity, have the germ⁵ of every virtue implanted in her heart, and the robe of righteousness spread over her frame, until at length, under the dispensations of His providence,⁶

¹ **sublime and transcendently interesting** – belonging to the highest regions of thought and surpassing interest of any other kind.

² **inimitably** – in a way that cannot be imitated.

³ **atonement** – theologically, atonement means reconciliation with God by removing or covering the guilt of sin; this was accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. See Free Grace Broadcaster 227, *Atonement*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴ **cordial** – heartfelt.

⁵ **germ** – first principle; that from which anything springs.

⁶ **dispensations of His providence** – God's arrangement of events by divine rule and care.

the means of His grace, and the sanctifying agency of His Spirit, the last spot of moral defilement might be [blotted out], the last wrinkle of spiritual decay removed, and—like the king’s daughter, all glorious within and with her clothing of wrought gold (Psa 45:13)—she might be presented, covered with the beauties of holiness to the Lord Jesus in that day, “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2Th 1:10)!

Behold, what manner of love this is! And it is *this* most amazing, this unparalleled act of mercy that is employed by the apostle as *the motive of all Christian conduct*...He fetched his motives to good works from the cross. He made the power of that to be felt, not only on the conscience as supplying the means of pardon, but upon the heart as furnishing the most cogent⁷ and, at the same time, the most insinuating⁸ argument for sanctification⁹...*By the death of a crucified Savior* and an exhibition of His most unbounded compassion, he attacks the vice of the depraved heart and inculcates¹⁰ all the virtues of the renewed mind.

The doctrine of the cross is the substance of Christian truth and the great support of Christian morals: the apostle’s mind and heart were full of it. Does he enforce humility? It is thus: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi 2:5). An unreserved devotedness to God? It is thus: “know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1Co 6:19-20). Brotherly love? It is thus: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1Jo 4:10-11). A forgiving temper? It is thus: “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph 4:32). Benevolence to the poor? It is thus: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2Co 8:9). And who but an apostle would have thought of enforcing conjugal affection by a reference to the love of Christ to

⁷ **cogent** – powerfully persuasive.

⁸ **insinuating** – subtly penetrating.

⁹ **sanctification** – Sanctification is the work of God’s Spirit whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness. (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 34) See Free Grace Broadcaster 215, *Sanctification*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁰ **inculcates** – teaches and impresses by frequent repetition.

His church? And he has done this and has thus represented redeeming love as a kind of holy atmosphere, surrounding the Christian on all sides, accompanying him everywhere, sustaining the spiritual existence, the very element in which his [faith in and devotion to Christ] lives, moves, and has its being. This indeed is biblical Christianity:¹¹ not a name, not a creed, not a form, not an abstract feeling, not an observance of times and places, not a mere mental costume or holy dress that we put on exclusively for certain seasons and occasions—no! but a moral habit, a mental taste, the spirit of the mind, which will spontaneously appear in our language, feeling, and behavior by a reference to Jesus Christ as the ground of hope and the model for imitation...

I shall begin with [the duties] of the husband. He is commanded to *love* his wife...The question very naturally arises, “For what reason is it so especially enjoined upon the husband? Why is *he* so particularly bound to the exercise of affection?” Perhaps for the following reasons: (1) Because in the very nature of things, *he* is most in danger of failing in his duty. Placed by the Creator as the “head of the wife” and invested with a certain right to govern his household, he is more in peril of merging the tender sensibilities in the predominant consciousness of superiority. (2) Because he is more deficient in this duty than the other party...it may be truly said that husbands are usually more deficient in love than wives. The latter, in my opinion, excel the former in tenderness, in strength, in constancy of affection. (3) Because a lack of love on the part of the man is likely to be attended with more misery to the other party: he can go to greater excesses in violence, in cruelty, in depravity. The lack of this tender passion in *him* is likely to have a still worse effect upon his own character and the peace of the wife than the lack of it in her. In either case, a destitution of this kind is a melancholy thing; but in *him*, it is on several accounts the most to be dreaded.

The apostle lays down two models or rules for a husband’s affection: one is, *the love that Christ has manifested for His church*; and the other, *the love that a man bears for himself*.

In directing your attention to the first, I shall exhibit the properties of Christ’s love and show in what way *our* affection should be conformed to His.

¹¹ EDITOR’S NOTE: The author originally used the word *religion*, by which he meant biblical Christianity and faith in Jesus Christ. To avoid confusion for modern readers who view “religion” as any system of faith and worship devoted to a higher power, it has been replaced with the term *biblical Christianity*.

Christ's love was *sincere*. He did not love in word only, but "in deed, and in truth" (1Jo 3:18). In Him, there was no dissimulation;¹² no epithets of endearment¹³ going forth out of feigned¹⁴ lips; no actions varnished over with a mere covering of love. We must be like Him and endeavor to maintain a principle of true regard in the heart, as well as a show of it in the conduct. It is a miserable thing to have to *act* the part of love without feeling it...Besides, how difficult it is to act the part well, to keep on the mask, and to support the character to escape detection! Oh, the misery of that woman's heart, who at length finds out to her cost, that what she had been accustomed to receive and value as the attentions of a lover are but the tricks of a cunning dissembler.¹⁵

The love of the Redeemer was *ardent*. Let us, if we would form a correct idea of what should be the state of our hearts towards the woman of our choice, think of the affection that glowed in the breast of [the] Savior when He lived and died for His people. It is true, we can possess neither the same kind nor the same degree of regard; but surely when we are referred to such an instance—if not altogether as a model, yet as a motive—it does teach us that no weak affection is due or should be offered to the wife of our bosom. We are told by the Savior Himself that if He laid down His life for us, it is our duty to lay down ours for the brethren. How much more for the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Pro 18:24)? And if it be our duty *to lay down our life*, how much more to employ it while it lasts in all the offices of an affection—strong, steady, and inventive. She that for our sake has forsaken the comfortable home, the watchful care, and the warm embrace of her parents has a right to expect in our regard that which shall make her forget her father's house (Psa 45:10) and cause her to feel that with respect to happiness, she is no loser by the exchange. Happy the woman—such should every husband strive to make his wife—who can look back without a sigh upon the moment when she [left] forever the guardians, the companions, and the scenes of her childhood!

The love of Christ to His church was *supreme*. He gives to the world His benevolence, but to the church His complacency.¹⁶ "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee" said the prophet, "is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will

¹² **dissimulation** – hypocrisy.

¹³ **epithets of endearment** – expressions of love, affection, fondness.

¹⁴ **feigned** – insincere.

¹⁵ **dissembler** – phony; pretender; hypocrite.

¹⁶ **complacency** – being pleased with; satisfaction.

joy over thee with singing” (Zep 3:17). So must the husband regard his wife above all else: he must rest in his love. He should regard her not only above all *without* his house, but above all *within* it. She must take precedence both in his heart and conduct, not only of all strangers, but of all relatives and of all his children. He ought to love his children for her sake, rather than her for theirs. Is this always the case? On the contrary, have we not often seen men who appear to be far more interested in their children than in their wives, and who have paid far less attention to the latter than to grown-up daughters? How especially unseemly is it for a man to be seen fonder of the society of any other woman than that of his wife, even where nothing more may be intended than the pleasure of her company. Nor ought he to forsake her in his leisure hours for any companions of his *own* sex, however interesting might be their manners or their conversation.

The love of Christ is *uniform* Like Himself, it is “the same yesterday, to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). Conjugal affection should have the same character: it should be always and in all places alike the same at home as abroad, in other persons’ houses as in our own. Has not many a wife to sigh and exclaim, “Oh! That I were treated in my own house with the same tenderness and attention as I receive in company.” With what almost loathing and disgust must such a woman turn from endearments, which under such circumstances she can consider as nothing but hypocrisy. Home is the chief place for fond and minute attention; and she who has not to complain of a lack of it there will seldom feel the need or the inclination to complain of a lack of it abroad...

The love of the Redeemer was *practical* and *laborious* He provided everything by His mediation for the welfare and comfort of the church, and at a cost and by exertions of which we can form no idea. It has been already declared that both parties are to assist in the cares of life. A *good* wife cannot be an idle one. Beautiful is her portraiture as drawn by the wise man. “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies...” (Pro 31:10-31). This exquisite picture, combining as it does industry, prudence, dignity, meekness, wisdom and piety, cannot be too frequently or minutely studied by those who would attain to high degrees of female excellence.

The business of providing for the family, however, belongs chiefly to the husband. It is yours, my brethren, to rise early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of carefulness, and to drink, if necessary, the waters of affliction that you may earn by the sweat of your brow a comfortable support for the domestic circle. This is probably what the apostle

meant when he enjoined us to give honor to the wife as to the “weaker vessel” (1Pe 3:7): the honor of maintenance, which she in consequence of the weakness of her frame and the frequent infirmities that the maternal relation brings upon her is not so well able to procure for herself. In most barbarous countries and in some half-civilized ones, the burden of manual labor falls upon the female, while her tyrant lord lives in indolence,¹⁷ feeding upon the industry of the hapless being whom he calls a wife, but treats as a slave. And are there no such idle tyrants in our age and country, who so as they can live in indolence and gratify their appetites, care not how they oppress their wives?—*wretches* who do little or nothing for the support of the family? How utterly lost to every noble and generous sentiment must that man be whose heart cannot be moved by the entreaties or tears of an interesting¹⁸ woman—who can hear in vain her pleadings for *his* child at her breast and *his* child by her side, who by such appeals cannot be induced to give up his daily visits to the tavern or his habits of sauntering idleness¹⁹ to attend to his neglected business and stay the approaching tide of poverty and ruin. Such a creature is worse than a brute: he is a monster. It seems a pity that there is no law and no conviction to bear him away to a land where if he will not work, so neither could he eat (2Th 3:10)...Let the husband, then, have the care of providing, the wife that of distributing to the necessities of the family; for this is the rule both of reason and revelation.

And as Christ labored for His church, not only during His abode upon earth, but made provision for its welfare when He departed from our world, in like manner should the husband take care of his wife. I never could understand the propriety of that custom, which is but too common, of men’s providing by their wills so much better for the children than they do for the mother. Does this look like a *supreme* love? Every man who raises a woman to the rank of his wife should take care, however inferior she might have been in circumstances before their marriage, to leave her in the situation into which he brought her. It is indeed most cruel to leave her to be deprived at once, not only of her dearest earthly friend, but of her usual means of comfortable subsistence.

A practical affection to a wife extends, however, to everything: it should manifest itself in the most delicate attention to her comfort and her feelings; in consulting her tastes; in concealing her failings,

¹⁷ **indolence** – habitual laziness.

¹⁸ **interesting** – pregnant.

¹⁹ **sauntering** – strolling about wasting time.

in never doing anything to degrade her, but everything to exalt her before her children and servants; in acknowledging her excellencies and commending her efforts to please him; in meeting and even in anticipating all her reasonable requests; in short, in doing all that ingenuity can invent for her substantial happiness and general comfort.

Christ's love to His church was *durable* and *unchangeable*. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (Joh 13:1) without abatement²⁰ or alteration. So ought men to love their wives, not only at the beginning, but to the end of their union—when the charms of beauty have fled before the withering influence of disease; when the vigorous and sprightly frame has lost its elasticity and the step has become slow and faltering, when the wrinkles of age have succeeded to the bloom of youth, and the whole person seems rather the monument than the resemblance of what it once was. Has she not gained in mind what she has lost in exterior fascinations? Have not her mental graces flourished amidst the ruins of personal charms? If the rose and the lily have faded on the cheek, have not the fruits of righteousness grown in the soul? If those blossoms have departed, on which the eye of youthful passion gazed with so much ardor, has it not been to give way to the ripe fruit of Christian excellence? The woman is not what she was, but the wife, the mother, the Christian, are better than they were. For an example of conjugal love in all its power and excellence, point me not to the bride and bridegroom displaying during the first month of their union all the watchfulness and tenderness of affection, but let me look upon the husband and wife of fifty, whose love has been tried by the lapse and the changes of a quarter of a century, and who through this period and by these vicissitudes²¹ have grown in attachment and esteem; and whose affection, if not glowing with all the fervid heat of a midsummer's day, is still like the sunshine of an October noon—warm and beautiful, as reflected amidst autumnal tints.²²

From *The Family Monitor, or A Help to Domestic Happiness*,
in the public domain.

John Angell James (1785-1859): English Congregationalist preacher and author; born at Blandford, Dorsetshire, England, UK.



²⁰ **abatement** – decreasing.

²¹ **vicissitudes** – constant, unpredictable changes.

²² **autumnal tints** – autumn or fall colors.

LOVING YOUR WIFE AS YOURSELF

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.—Ephesians 5:28

THE husband must realize that his wife is a part of himself. He will not feel this instinctively; he has to be taught it, and the Bible in all its parts teaches it. In other words, the husband must understand that he and his wife are not two: they are *one*. The apostle keeps on repeating that: “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself...They two shall be one flesh...We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:28, 31, 30). That is all true of our relationship to the Lord; it is true also in this other relationship.

I would therefore put it in this way: it is not sufficient for us even to regard our wives as *partners*. They are partners, but they are more than partners. You can have two men in business who are partners, but that is not the analogy. The analogy goes higher than that. It is not a question of partnership, though it includes that idea. There is another phrase that is often used—at least, it used to be common—that puts it so much better and that seems to me to be an unconscious statement of the Christian teaching. It is the expression used by men when they refer to their wives as “my better half.” Now that is exactly right. She is not a partner; she is the other half of the man. “They two shall be one flesh.” “My better half.” The very word *half* puts the whole case that the apostle elaborates here. We are not dealing with two units, two entities, but dealing with two halves of one—“They two shall be one flesh.” Therefore, in the light of this, the husband must no longer think singly or individually. That should be quite impossible in marriage, says the apostle, because, “He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” He is in a sense not loving somebody else, he is loving himself. Such is the difference that marriage makes.

On the practical level, therefore, the whole of the husband’s thinking must include his wife also. He must never think of himself in isolation or in detachment. The moment he does so, he has broken the most fundamental principle of marriage. Everybody sees it when it happens on the physical level, but the real damage is done before that, on the intellectual and the spiritual level. In a sense, the mo-

ment a man thinks of himself in isolation, he has broken the marriage. And he has no right to do that! There is a sense in which he cannot do it because the wife is a part of himself. But if it happens, he is certain to inflict grievous damage on his wife; and it is a damage in which he himself will be involved because she is a part of him. He is therefore even acting against himself, did he but realize it. His thinking, therefore, must never be personal in the sense of being *individualistic*. He is only the half, and what he does involves of necessity the other half. The same applies to his desires. He must never have any desire for himself alone. He is no longer one man, he is no longer free in that sense; his wife is involved in all his desires. It is his business therefore to see that he is always fully alive to these considerations. He must never think of his wife, in other words, as an addition. Still less—I am sorry that I have to use such an expression—as an encumbrance;¹ but there are many who do so...

[A husband] must therefore deliberately remind himself constantly of what is true of him in this married state, and that must govern and control all his thinking, all his wishing, all his desiring, indeed the totality of his life and activity.

But we can go further and put this more strongly. Verse 28 closes with the words, “He that loveth his wife loveth himself”; but we remember that the apostle, in describing the relationship between the Lord and the church, has used the analogy of the body. “So,” he further says in the same verse, “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.” Then he elaborates it in verse 29: “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.” Here, then, is the teaching: that we not only have to realize that the husband and wife are one, but the husband must realize that the wife is actually a part of himself according to this analogy of the body. A man’s attitude to his wife, says the apostle, should be his attitude, as it were, to his body. That is the analogy, and it is more than an analogy...The woman was originally taken out of the man (Gen 2:21-22). There we have the proof of the fact that she is a part of the man, and that describes the characteristic of the unity. The man, therefore, is told this: “So ought men to love their wives as their own body.” Now that little word *as* is a most important and vital one because we can easily misunderstand it. Paul does not say, “So ought men to love their wives in the same way as they love their bodies.” That is not the meaning. The meaning is, “So ought men to love

¹ **encumbrance** – burden; annoyance.

their wives because they are their own bodies.” A man loves his wife as his body—that is what he is saying. Not “as” he loves his body so must he love his wife. No! A man must love his wife as his body—as a part of himself. As Eve was a part of Adam, taken out of his side, so the wife is to the man because she is a part of him.

I am stressing this because the apostle brings out clearly, namely, to show that there is this element of indissolubility² about marriage, which, as I understand the biblical teaching, can only be broken by adultery. But what we are concerned to say now is that the apostle puts it in this form in order that a husband may see that he cannot detach himself from his wife. You cannot detach yourself from your body, so you cannot detach yourself from your wife. She is a part of you, says the apostle, so remember that always. You cannot live in isolation; you cannot live in detachment. If you realize that, there will be no danger of your thinking in detachment, no danger of your wishing and willing and desiring any detachment. Still less can there be any antagonism or hatred. Notice how he puts it: “No man,” he says, to ridicule the thing, “no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.” So, any element of hatred between husband and wife is sheer madness; it shows that the man has no conception at all as to what marriage means. “No man hated his own flesh”—but his wife is his own flesh; she is his body. So, he is to love his wife as his own body.

What does this lead to in practice? Here I come to very detailed teaching that is needed by all—Christian people as well as others. God knows, we all have failed; we all have sinned by failing to understand this teaching and to apply it in detail. The principle is that the wife is, as it were, the body of the man. So, what his body is to his personality, his wife should be to him. Out of that comes the apostle’s detailed teaching. How is a man to treat his wife? Let me give some negatives first.

He is not to abuse her. It is possible for a man to abuse his body, and many men do abuse their bodies—by eating too much, by drinking too much, and in various other ways. That is to abuse the body, to maltreat it,³ to be unkind to it. Now, says the apostle, a man who does that is a fool because if a man maltreats his body and abuses it, he himself is going to suffer. You cannot detach yourself from your body; and if you think you can, and abuse your body, you will be the

² **indissolubility** – incapable of being dissolved or broken; permanence.

³ **maltreat** – treat badly.

one to suffer. Your mind will suffer, your heart will suffer, the whole of your life will suffer. You may say, "I do not care about my body, I am living a life of the intellect"; but if you keep on doing that, you will soon find that you no longer have the intellect that you once had, and you will not be able to think as you once did. If you abuse your body, you are the one who is going to suffer. Not only the body, but you yourself will suffer as well. It is the same in the married relationship. If a man abuses his wife, he will suffer as well as the wife. So, apart from the inherent wrongfulness, *the man is a fool*. If a man abuses his wife, there is going to be a breakdown not only in the wife, but also in the man, and in the relationship between the two. Surely this is what is happening so commonly in the world today. It should be *unthinkable* that a Christian man should abuse his wife.

But not only should the husband not abuse his wife, in the second place, he should not neglect her. Come back again to the analogy of the body. A man can neglect his body. It often happens, and again, it always leads to trouble. To neglect the body is bad, it is foolish, it is wrong. Man has been so constituted that he is body, mind, and spirit, and the three are in intimate relationship one with another. We are all surely aware of this. Take an example in terms of the frailty of the body. If I am suffering from laryngitis, I cannot preach, though I may want to do so. I may be full of ideas and of a desire to preach; but if my throat is inflamed, I cannot speak. And it is so with the whole of the body. If you neglect the body, you yourself will suffer for it. Many a man has done that, many a scholar has done that, and through neglect of the body his work has suffered. That is because of the essential unity between these parts of our personalities.

It is the same in the married relationship, says the apostle. How much trouble is caused in the realm of marriage simply because of neglect! Very recently there has been evidence in the papers by medical men who have reported that large numbers of wives today have been driven to chain smoking. Why? Simply because they have been neglected by their husbands. The husbands spend their nights out at sports, or in their public house, or playing games with their friends; and the poor wife is left at home with the children and the work. The husband comes home at night just in time to go to bed and to sleep; and he gets up and goes out in the morning. Neglect of the wife is leading to these nervous conditions that reveal themselves in excessive smoking and other manifestations of nervous tension. It is lamentable that a man should get married and then proceed to neglect his wife. In other words, here is a man who has married, but who in

essential matters goes on living as if he were still a bachelor. He is still living his own detached life; he still spends his time with his men friends.

I could elaborate on this very easily, but the facts are so familiar that it is unnecessary. But I have a feeling that I detect a tendency even in Christian circles, and even in evangelical circles, to forget this particular point. A married man must no longer act as if he were a single man; his wife should be involved in everything...Of course, the man in his business has to be alone, and there are other occasions when he has to be alone; but if it is a social occasion, something into which a wife can enter, she should enter; and it is the business of the husband to see to it that she does enter...But there is another aspect of this matter that at times causes me great concern. I am constantly hearing of what sometimes has been called “evangelical widows.” The expression means that the husband of that particular type of woman is a man who is out every night at some meeting or other. His explanation, indeed his argument, is that he is engaged in good Christian work; but he seems to forget that he is a married man...The conduct of such a husband is grievously sinful. Though it is done in the name of active Christian work, a man cannot and must not contract out of his married relationship in that way because the wife is a part of him—his “better half,” *not his slave*.

Christian husbands must therefore examine themselves in this matter. A home is not a dormitory where a man returns to sleep. No! There is to be this active, ideal, positive relationship; and we must ever be holding it in the forefront of our mind. A man therefore must seek wisdom from God to know how to divide himself up in this respect. But I care not what a man is; if he is a married man, he must not behave as a single man, even in connection with Christian work, because in so doing he is denying the very teaching of the gospel that he claims to be preaching. There can be untold selfishness just at that point...So, I move on to the third practical outworking of the teaching.

The husband must not abuse his wife, he must not neglect his wife, and, thirdly, he must never take her for granted. The positive element must always be there. A man’s wife is not just his housekeeper; there is this positive element. How can that best be brought out? Let me take the apostle’s own terms. He puts it like this: “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but”—What? “Nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church”...Once more, this can be worked out in terms of the analogy that a man does not

hate his own body, but nourishes it and cherishes it. How does he do so? We can divide it up simply thus:

First of all, there is the question of diet. A man must think about his diet, about his food. He must take sufficient nourishment, he must take it regularly, and so on. All that must be worked out in terms of husband and wife. The man should be thinking of what will help his wife, what will strengthen his wife. As we take our food, we not only think in terms of calories or protein, fat, and carbohydrate; we are not purely scientific, are we? Another element comes into this question of food. We are influenced also by what appeals to the palate, by what gives us pleasure and enjoyment. So ought the husband to treat his wife. He should be thinking of what pleases her, what gives her pleasure, what she likes, what she enjoys. Of course, before he got married, he went out of his way to do this; but then after he gets married, he often stops doing so. Is that not the difficulty?...Consider her whole personality and her soul. There has to be this active thought about the development of the wife and her life in this amazing relationship that God Himself has established.

Again, there is the question of exercise. The analogy of the body suggests that at once. Exercise for the body is essential; exercise is equally essential in the married relationship. It can mean as simple a thing as this—just talking. Alas, I have known trouble in marriages so often, *simply because of an absence of conversation*. We all know how much there is to be said by way of excuse. A man is tired, he has been at his work or his office all day, and he comes home weary and tired and wants rest and peace. Yes, but the same thing is also true of his wife, with the difference that perhaps she has been alone all day or only had the society of little children. Whether we feel like it or not, *we must talk*. The wife needs exercise in this sense. Tell her about your business, about your worries, about your affairs;⁴ bring her into it. She is your body, she is a part of you, so allow her to speak concerning it. Consult her, let her bring her understanding to bear. She is a part of your life, so bring her into the whole of your life. Make yourself talk...I repeat once more that I know all the excuses, and how difficult it often can be; but let me put it like this—I think it is a fair argument. This man was equally tired and working equally hard before he got married; but in the days before marriage, whatever he had been doing, he was most anxious to talk to his fiancée and to bring her into everything. Why should that stop when they get married? It

⁴ **affairs** – matters of personal concern.

should not stop, says the apostle. The husband and wife are one. Look at her, and consider her as you do your body, and remember this element of exercise. Bring her into everything deliberately. It will be wonderful for her, for her development; and it will be good for you yourself because the whole marriage will grow and develop as you do so.

And that brings us to the fourth point, which is the element of protection. Here is this body—it needs food, it needs exercise; but in addition, every man has to learn to understand his own body. The apostle works out the argument. The apostle Peter, you remember, puts it like this. He tells the husband to remember that his wife is “the weaker vessel.” This means that these bodies of ours are subject to certain things. We are all different even in a physical sense. Some of us are subject, perhaps, to feeling the cold, or subject to chills in a way that does not seem to worry other men. Some of us are so constituted that we have these minor problems; and we are subject to odd infections and various other things that come to try us. What does a wise man do? He takes great care about such things: he puts on a heavy overcoat in winter, he may put on a scarf; and he refrains from doing certain things. He is protecting himself and his weak constitution against some of the hazards that come to meet us in life. “So ought men to love their wives.” Have you discovered that your wife has some peculiar temperamental weakness? Have you discovered that she has certain special characteristics? Is she nervous and apprehensive, or is she too outspoken? It does not matter what it is in particular; she has certain characteristics that are, in a sense, weaknesses. What is your reaction to them? Are you irritated or annoyed? And do you tend to condemn them and to dismiss them? Act as you do with your body, says the apostle. Protect her against them, guard her against them. If your wife happens to have been born with that worrying temperament, well, save her from it, protect her. Do everything you can to safeguard her from the weaknesses and the infirmities and the frailties; as you do so for your body, do so for your wife...She is “the weaker vessel”...

We leave it at that...We have been looking at one big principle that is most important. A man has to love his wife “even as”—because she is—his own body. “No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”

From *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home, and Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 213-221, used by permission; www.banneroftruth.org.



THE FORCE OF LOVE¹

Benjamin M. Palmer (1818-1902)

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.
—Colossians 3:19

IT is worthy of special notice that, in all the apostolic injunctions, the great duty enforced upon [the husband] is *love*. In addition to the testimony placed at the head of this chapter, the obligation is more fully expounded in the epistle to the Ephesians: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself...For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church...Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself” (Eph 5:25, 28-29, 33).

But is not love as much the duty of the wife? Nay, in our philosophy, we would presume to say that it chiefly falls upon her to be the exponent of its mighty power. It is with some surprise that we find it set home upon the conscience of the husband as *his* paramount obligation, and we cannot rest until we discover the ground of this discrimination...The command to *love* is clearly designed to comprehend the entire office of the husband with its distinct functions. Are we able to trace the wisdom of the word?

1. *The husband is the representative and channel of the love in which the marital relation has its ground.* It is not necessary to show that love is the element in which the family moves, the atmosphere which sustains its life, or that it is the basis upon which marriage is contracted and without which it is little better than licensed sexual immorality. This may be assumed. If enlarged upon, it would only be to lend emphasis to exhortation, which is not at present our aim.

Let it be observed, then, in the order of nature, this love begins with the man. He is the chooser, which explains the peculiar language in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.” It is not put the other way, although in reality it involves a heavier sacrifice when the woman

¹ EDITOR’S NOTE: For the benefit of modern readers, this article has been edited significantly more than usual.

leaves the home of her youth. But it is not her place to take the initiative. Woman must impose a restraint upon her affections until she is challenged. Like the violet, she hides her sweetness beneath the leaf until the hand is stretched to pluck her from concealment. She may arouse the love that shall draw forth her own in absolute response, but that love must first speak from another's lips, of which her own is but the echo. Since, then, this love is first cherished by the man, is first recognized, and is first uttered by him, he represents it in its active and controlling power throughout life. His love must always go in the front. As he began, so must he continue to be its promoter and representative. It pertains to his office as the husband to lay the foundations of the new society and communion in love; and he is the channel through which it speaks its great commands. There is vast significance in the fact that with him, love is a primary duty, binding upon the conscience and not simply a blind instinct operating mechanically, like that of the brute. It is a force that he originates, and for the perpetuation of which he is made therefore responsible. It is to be henceforth the law of his life and the spring of all his actions towards her who by that love has been won to his embrace. He is constituted the guardian of that in which all true marriage has its life and being.

2. Man's nature being the rougher of the two, his love needs to be brought under the empire of the will and to be cultivated as a principle. The novelist and the poet may treat love as an *emotion* or as a *passion*; but the moralist must go down to the root, out of which both these spring, and recognize it as a *principle*. As such, it may be cultivated: not directly, perhaps, but indirectly. For only thus can the emotions be controlled by a force that lies behind them and by a law that makes them dependent upon it for all their manifestations. For example: there is the mighty power of habit, growing from the repeated exercise of the principle. And where is this more profusely illustrated than in marriage, where the habit of love grows stronger, whilst the mere emotion becomes weaker? Again, we may compel attention to those personal qualities that first awakened affection; and, thus, the dying embers may be kindled into as fresh a flame as when it first burst forth from the deep places of the heart. Again, the conscience may be trained to consider the obligation growing out of our original choice, when we sued for the corresponding affection that would render us happy. It must be a cold and ungrateful heart that can resist so constant an appeal to its own generosity. These specifications will suffice to show at least some of the methods by which the principle of love may be

made to strike its roots deeper into the heart; which, by the natural law of expansion, will bud into the feelings and bloom at length into the full passion of love. It is well for us that, when the novelty of enjoyment is quenched in the *possession* of a wife, we come, *through the controlling power of habit*, into a fixed necessity of loving; and that mighty principle lives and works unseen in the depths of our nature, shooting forth new blooms as fast as the old decay and fall.

Woman, by her more gentle and confiding constitution, may be left largely to the action of her own softer and sweeter instincts. But man, whose natural roughness might oppose the development, is ordained that his affections shall be educated by the conscience and be regulated by the will. By so much the more is he rendered conscious of his responsibility as the official expounder and guardian of the love on which marriage rests. Of course, nothing that is here written is to be construed as taking woman's reciprocal love out of the sphere of morality and treating it as simply constitutional and instinctive. Because her nature is identical with that of man—shown in her creation from his side—she comes under the guidance and sanctions of the same laws with him. It is only meant that what is true of both may be applied with a special emphasis to the man, so far as moral influences may be particularly necessary to the development of his character and the regulation of his conduct.

3. *Man's occupations in life being more diverse than those of woman may too completely engross his thoughts.* The wife finds her world in the home, the care of which belongs to her by vocation. It is her function to preside over it, as a judge sits upon the bench, or an advocate pleads at the bar, or a merchant moves in the circles of commerce. Sheltered from the ruder cares of life, she breathes the atmosphere of love; and in the constant discharge of its sweet and pleasant duties, she is in little danger of escaping from its influence and control. But with man, swallowed up in the details of business, love is apt to prove too much of an episode.² Enticed from the tender loves of his home, and preoccupied with the anxieties and labors of the outside world, his heart is apt to harden under the influences that are so unfavorable to the development of the affections. We cannot, therefore, but approve the wisdom that lays him thus preeminently under the law of love and binds him with its holy obligations.

4. *This command determines the nature of his authority and tempers it with grace.* Under every government, the sovereignty must vest in

² **episode** – digression in a story (husband's life), distinct from the main subject (his work).

some recognized head. There must be a last tribunal, beyond which no appeal can lie. In the supreme sense, this belongs to God alone; but in the family, which is constituted under God's providence, the awe-inspiring privilege and advantage of representing God's power attaches to the husband and the father. He is delegated as the head of the domestic state, and his authority binds the house together. This view of his position is too little considered, yet how it sanctifies every relation and every duty! If he stands as the representative of God to all beneath his sway, with what consideration should he administer his sacred trust! And how is all humiliation taken away from those who obey, when the scepter to which they bow bears the inscription of the divine name...Here is at once the limitation and the grant of his power. The one is folded within the other: if he stands for God in the absoluteness of his rule, then must he take the justice, the tenderness, and forbearance of the Divine Lawgiver as the tests of his own fidelity. He who rules for God in this primary commonwealth must himself learn the law of love as the undertone of his own authority. We construe the apostle's word, not simply as a check against whims and self-will, but as defining the nature of his rule, bringing it into the sphere of *grace* and making it *the kingdom of love!* It is founded upon love in its origination; it is to be administered in the spirit of love as the supreme law; and from the husband, standing at the fountain and spring of his solemn headship, flows out this law of love to all under his dominion. In order to this, he is inaugurated into office under the sanction of this great command, apart from which he descends into a tyrant and usurper.

Without penetrating further into the philosophy of the case, the reasons presented above are sufficient to explain the stress that is laid upon the husband's love. The general idea is enforced by the form of the exhortation addressed to him: "*Be not bitter against them*"...the word *bitter* indicates not so much a special fault to be censured, as the fundamental danger and temptation to which the relation is exposed. The reference is to that authority with which the husband is *invested*, and the abuse of which is his constant peril. The word *bitter* touches this as with the point of a needle; and it may not be amiss to suggest some of the more obvious directions in which, as often from thoughtlessness as through malignity, an abuse of marital authority may be a source of bitterness to her who is the subject of it.

1. *There is sometimes a lordly assumption of superiority and depreciation of the wife as inferior.* Nothing can be more irritating to her pride. Is it not enough that man is invested with an official supremacy to which

she must pay the homage of respect, that this must be pushed to the extreme of humiliation? All her instincts revolt against the degradation, which would really unfit her for the duties of her position. If taken from his very substance, how can she be inferior in dignity of nature? If given back to him as a suitable help, how can she prove his counterpart, if she be not his equal? How can she be associated with him in a joint rule, if she stands not upon the same level? The fact is that all comparisons between the two, as to which should be pronounced the worthier, are shallow and irrelevant. Each is the best in its place, and neither is perfect without the other. The distinction of sex runs through the entire nature of both, so that they differ as truly in their spiritual as in their physical structure; but this very distinction forbids the comparison between the two. What is called the weakness of woman is really her strength. It springs from the more exquisite delicacy of her organization, both intellectual and physical, by which she is fitted for the more delicate and tender offices that she is called to discharge. The dependence to which all this adapts her is not her degradation, but her glory. It betrays, then, only the folly of him who is unable to distinguish betwixt *submission* and *inferiority*; and who fails to remember that submission in office often obtains where there is absolute equality in rank. There is not a bitterer bitter to a true woman than this belittling, which degrades her in the eyes of him she is herself bound to honor.

2. *There is also a pretentious parade of authority in needless demands of obedience.* It is no small proof of the divine goodness that there is joy in dependence, whenever it runs in the groove that nature has provided for it. But, then, it may be attended with a friction that shall wear out the machinery. There is, indeed, a soft lining under the chains that love puts around the limbs. But even with this, they may be pulled and twisted with a thoughtless roughness, which shall chafe these limbs and leave unsightly scars where they should only adorn. Even the gentle dependence of woman resents the cowardly tyranny, which wields authority with no other motive than to display the power with which it is grasped.

3. *There is bitterness in withholding the demonstration of love, which is a woman's comfort.* She was won by this, and for this left the calmer affections of her childhood's home. It is the tribute due her for the sacrifice; and there is a sense of outrage and wrong when, on fitting occasions, it is withheld. It is not simply the loss of what she had reckoned as her gain, but a feeling of dishonor in being displaced from the throne of the affections. The obtrusive attentions of courtship

were accepted as evidences of a love that would never know abatement; and the sacred pledge can only be redeemed by a considerate watchfulness through life, which need not degenerate into a fawning and submissive fondness to one's wife to satisfy all the demands of her heart.

4. *It is another form of the same thing, when proper sympathy is refused in her cares.* Man's burden rests upon him in bulk, and the energies of the will are more easily summoned to its support. Woman's lot is not so much one of toil, as of solicitude, which wears her out by the attrition. A kind look, or a soft tone, will be as oil to smooth the rub. It makes the cross a joy, if it wins love's tribute to love's constant and patient sacrifice.

5. *The withdrawal of society is another bitterness to her, who needs to build upon it for herself and for her household.* Marriage secludes her from the world. It was never meant that home should be her prison, to commune in solitude and silence only with disappointed hopes and blighted joys. It is a clear subversion of her just right, when the deserted wife is reduced to envy the coarser rivals—whether it be an engrossing business, or the frenzy of politics, or the pleasures of the club and the saloon—which have supplanted her in her supremacy.

6. *Worst of all is the bitterness of her soul, who mourns over a husband utterly unworthy of her reverence.* If there be a bondage more intolerable than another, it is to serve without affection. But the pang here is that the affection, which once made service a delight, has been killed outright in the woman's soul, and she cannot recall it to life. Her heart is withered within her and has turned to dust. She is bound by chains stronger than iron to what is henceforth to her only "a body of death." And yet, to this loathsome corruption, which breeds offence at every turn, she has vowed the homage of her respect. But respect is a thing that must be deserved. It was cheerfully promised at the marriage altar, when all seemed to be fair and true. Now, when the temptations of sin have drawn away from integrity and honor him whom the Law of God and her own choice placed over her as a head, what must be the bitterness of her spirit who finds devotion, esteem, and love melting out of her heart towards one who has so dismally ceased to be for her a covering and a glory!

We cannot pursue these thoughts, which excite at once the twin emotions of indignation and of pity. They have been pushed thus far, only as illustrating the comprehensive designation of the husband's office by the word *love*. The dignity and sacredness of the relation are alike expressed by it; for no higher or more solemn trust can be as-

signed than officially to represent this divine principle just at the point where all human society is found in the germ.

Such, then, is the broad doctrine of the husband's supremacy grounded in love. It receives additional emphasis from the two-fold argument by which the apostle enforces it upon the conscience. The first is *the consideration of the wife's identity with her husband*. The reference, of course, is to the mystery of the woman's being taken from the body of the man. She is, therefore, his other self. "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen 2:21-23). Though now existing apart from him, with a personality of her own, she is restored by marriage to a mystical reunion with him. The rib, which was taken out of his side, is replaced by the living form that is the complement of himself, so that "He that loveth his wife loveth himself" (Eph 5:28). And as "no man ever hated his own flesh," so in "nourishing and cherishing her" (Eph 5:29), he simply loves his own body. There is a depth of tenderness in this, which just floods the heart with soft and blessed sympathies. It is love itself that puts the crown of headship upon man; who, in the splendor of this majesty, folds within himself the gentle counterpart of his own being, who wreathes the garland around his brow. She is henceforth one with him in a mystical unity, holier and closer than that which was broken when the flesh was closed over the cleft in his side.

From *The Family, in Its Civil and Churchly Aspects* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publications, 1876), 26-45, in the public domain.

Benjamin Morgan Palmer (1818-1902): American Presbyterian preacher and theologian; born in Charleston, South Carolina, USA.



I ask you to notice what is not always the case with regard to the husband and the wife: *the Lord Jesus loves His church unselfishly*, that is to say, He never loved her for what she has, but what she is. Nay, I must go further than that and say that He loved her, not so much for what she is, but what He makes her as the object of His love. He loves her not for what comes to Him from her or with her, but for what He is able to bestow upon her. His is the strongest love that ever was,
 for He has loved uncomeliness until He has changed it
 into beauty.—*C. H. Spurgeon*

AS THEIR OWN BODIES

John Angell James (1785-1859)

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.—Ephesians 5:28

A man's children are parts of himself; his wife *is* himself: "For they two shall be one flesh" (Eph 5:31). This is his duty and the measure of it too, which is so plain that, if he understands how he treats himself, there needs nothing be added concerning his demeanor towards her. For "what mighty care does he take of his body, and uses it with a delicate tenderness, and cares for it in all contingencies,¹ and watches to keep it from all evils, and studies to make for it fair provisions, and is very often led by its inclinations and desires, and does never contradict its appetites but when they are evil, and then also not without some trouble and sorrow."² So, let a man love his wife as his own body.

Can it be necessary to apply the force of *motives* to produce an appropriate attention to such a duty? If so, I appeal to your *sense of honor*. Husbands, call to recollection the wakeful assiduities³ and the tender attentions by which you won the affection and the confidence of the woman, who forsook her father and her mother and the home of her childhood to find a resting place for her heart in your attachment. Will ye falsify the vows ye plighted and disappoint the hopes you raised?...That man has disgraced himself who furnishes just occasion to the partner of his days, to draw, with a sigh, a contrast between the affectionate attention she received as a lover and as a wife.

I urge affection to a wife by the recollection of *that solemn moment*, when in the presence of heaven and earth, before God's minister and in God's house, you bound yourself by all the deeply awful formalities of a kind of oath, to throw open and keep open your heart as the fountain of her earthly happiness and to devote your whole life to the promotion of her welfare.

I appeal to your regard to *justice*. You have sworn away yourself to her

¹ **contingencies** – all possible circumstances.

² From Jeremy Taylor, "The Marriage Ring" in *The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor* (London: F. Westly and A. H. Davis, 1836), 711.

³ **assiduities** – persistent efforts to please.

and are no longer your own. You have no right to that individual, separate, and independent kind of life, which would lead you to seek your happiness in opposition to or neglect of hers. You two are “one flesh.”

Humanity puts in its claim on behalf of your wife. It is in your power to do more for her happiness or misery than any other being in the universe, but God Himself. An unkind husband is a *tormentor* of the first class. His victim can never elude his grasp nor go beyond the reach of his cruelty, until she is kindly released by the king of terrors,⁴ who, in this instance, becomes to her an angel of light and conducts her to the grave as to a shelter from her oppressor. For such a woman, there is no rest on earth: the destroyer of her peace has her ever in his power, for she is always in his presence or in the fear of it. The circumstances of every place and every day furnish him with the occasions of cruel neglect or unkindness; and it might be fairly questioned, whether there is to be found on earth a case of greater misery—except it be that of a wretch tortured by remorse and despair—than a woman whose heart daily withers under the cold looks, the chilling words, and repulsive actions of a husband who loves her not. Such a man is a murderer, though he escapes in this world the murderer’s doom. And by a refinement of cruelty, he employs years in conducting his victim to her end by the slow process of a lingering death.

If nothing else can prevail, *interest* should, for no man can hate his wife without hating himself, for “she is his own flesh.” Love, like mercy, is a double blessing; and hatred, like cruelty, is a double torment. We cannot love a worthy object without rejoicing in the reflex beams of our own affection. Next to the supreme regard we cherish towards God, and which it is impossible to exercise and not hold communion with angels in the joys of heaven, connubial⁵ love is the most beatifying⁶ passion. To transvenom⁷ *this* into unkindness is to open—at the very center of our soul—a source of poison, which before it exudes to torture others torments ourselves.

I cannot here avoid inserting the exquisite and touching appeal, which Mr. Jay⁸ puts into the lips of married women to their husbands: “Honor us; deal kindly with us. From many of the opportunities and means by which you procure favorable notice, we are excluded. Doomed to the shades, few of the high places of the earth are open

⁴ **king of terrors** – death.

⁵ **connubial love** – love between a husband and wife; married love.

⁶ **beatifying** – making extremely happy.

⁷ **transvenom** – transform into something poisonous.

⁸ William Jay (1769-1853) – English Congregational preacher and author.

to us. Alternately we are adored and oppressed. From our slaves, you become our tyrants. You feel our beauty and avail yourselves of our weakness. You complain of our inferiority, but none of your behavior bids us rise. Sensibility has given us a thousand feelings, which nature has kindly denied you. Always under restraints, we have little liberty of choice. Providence seems to have been more attentive to enable us to confer happiness, than to enjoy it. Every condition has for us fresh mortifications;⁹ every relation new sorrows. We enter social bonds; it is a system of perpetual sacrifice. We cannot give life to others without hazarding our own. We have sufferings that you do not share, cannot share. If spared, years and decays invade our charms, and much of the ardor produced by attraction departs with it. We may die. The grave covers us, and we are soon forgotten; soon are the days of your mourning ended; soon is our loss repaired; dismissed even from your speech, our name is to be heard no more—a successor may dislike it. Our children, after having a mother by nature, may fall under the control of a mother by affinity and be mortified by distinctions made between them and her *own* offspring. Though the duties that we have discharged invariably be the most important and necessary, they do not shine. They are too common to strike: they procure no celebrity; the wife, the mother fills no historic page. Our privations, our confinements, our wearisome days, our interrupted, our sleepless nights, the hours we have hung in anxious watchings over your sick and dying offspring”¹⁰...

To conclude: Let us all seek after more of the spirit of true, biblical Christianity—the spirit of faith, of hope, of prayer. [This] faith really believes the Word of God and looks habitually to the cross of Christ by which we obtain salvation. [It looks] to the eternal world where we shall fully and forever enjoy it. [And this hope] lives in the expectation and desire of glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life, and [in] a spirit of prayer that leads us daily and hourly to the throne of divine grace for all that aid of the Holy Ghost. [This] we need, not only for the duties that refer to our relations in another world, but for those that devolve upon us¹¹ in consequence of our relations in this.

From *The Family Monitor, or Helps to Domestic Happiness*,
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⁹ **mortifications** – great embarrassments and shame.

¹⁰ William Jay, “The Duties of Husbands and Wives” in *The Works of the Rev. William Jay*, Vol. 3 (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1854), 174.

¹¹ **devolve upon us** – pass down or fall to us.

THE MASTER'S EXAMPLE

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Husbands, love your wives.—Ephesians 5:25

WHAT a golden example Christ gives to His disciples! There are few masters who could venture to say, “If you would practice my teaching, imitate my life.” But the life of Jesus is the exact transcript of perfect virtue, and therefore He can point to Himself as the paragon¹ of holiness, as well as the teacher of it.

The Christian should take nothing short of Christ for his model. Under no circumstances ought we to be content unless we reflect the grace that was in Christ Jesus. Even as a husband, which is a relationship that the Christian sustains in common with the rest of men, he is to look upon Christ Jesus as being set before him as the picture, and he is to paint according to that copy. Christ Himself being the bridegroom of the church, the true Christian is to seek to be such a husband as Christ was to His spouse...Let the Christian then aspire to be like unto his Lord, Who is the Author and Finisher of his faith. And let him, as he runs the heavenly race, look unto Jesus and make the Apostle and High Priest of his profession (Heb 3:1) his continual study, and aim to be changed into His image from glory unto glory (2Co 3:18).

You must be struck, in reading the passage before us, on what high ground the apostle takes the Christian. It is possible that some husbands might say, “How can I love such a wife as I have?” It might be a supposable case that some Christian was unequally yoked together with an unbeliever and found himself forever bound with a fetter to one possessed of a morose² disposition, of a froward temper, of a bitter spirit. He might therefore say, “Surely I am excused from loving in such a case as this. It cannot be expected that I should love that which is in itself so unlovely.” But mark, beloved, the wisdom of the apostle. He silences that excuse, which may possibly have occurred to his mind while writing the passage, by taking the example of the Savior, Who loved, not because there was loveliness in His church, *but in order to make her lovely*. You perceive He loved His church and gave

¹ **paragon** – person regarded as a perfect example of a particular quality.

² **morose** – sullen; unhappy.

Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph 5:25-28). He did not admire her because there was no spot in her; He did not choose her because she had no wrinkle; but fixed His affections where there were [innumerable] spots and wrinkles. Where everything was deformity, He still set His heart and would not withdraw until He had loved the spots away and loved every wrinkle out of her who was the object of His choice. And now He seems to say to every Christian man, however unhappily he may have fared, “If perchance in the lot of providence you have been yoked to one who deserves but little of your affection, yet if you cannot love because of esteem, love because of pity; if you cannot love because of present merit, then love because of future hope, for possibly, even there in that bad soil, some sweet flower may grow. Be not weary of holy tillage and of heavenly ploughing and sowing because at the last there may spring up some fair harvest that shall make glad your soul.” He loved His church and gave Himself for it that He might present it to Himself a glorious church...

First, then, may the Spirit of God help us while we look at the chosen church, the object of the Savior’s love. Some of our brethren are very fond of what is called the general or universal view of God’s benevolence...Some of these brethren are very much afraid of the peculiar and special sign of the Savior’s love, and they seem to shrink from a text that has anything particular and discriminating in it and shake it off from their hand into the fire, as Paul did the viper of old.

Now, we thank God [that] we have learned to love the distinguishing doctrines of grace and that *predestination* and *discrimination* are not hard words for us to pronounce now, neither do they grate upon our ears; but we love to read this text...Christ loved the *church* and gave Himself for *it*. We perceive that Christ did not love the *world* in the sense in which the term *loved* is here meant. We see here that Christ gave Himself not for the world, but for *it*, that is, the church. In the sense in which He is said here to give Himself, He did so for none except His chosen people, the church—His one, special, and particular object of affection. It is not thus that Christ has loved universal creatureship and all mankind alike without exception or difference; but He loved the church and gave Himself for *it*.

Now, what is this church that Jesus Christ loved, if it be not the entire company of the elect? As many as the Father gave Him from before the foundation of the world, whose names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life before the stars began to shine—as many as were

taken by Him to be the sheep of His pasture, the jewels of His crown, the children of His love, the subjects of His kingdom, the members of His body, each one of them being particularly known to Him and chosen in Him before the mountains lifted their heads into the clouds—so many compose the church of Christ that was the object of His redeeming love.

We must search for these chosen ones in what is called the church *visible*. We know that they are not all Israel who are of Israel, and that the visible church is not identical with the church that Christ loved, and for which He gave Himself. There is a church *invisible*, and this is the center and life of the church visible. What the wheat is to the chaff and heap upon the threshing floor, such are these living Christians amongst the mass of professors in the world. There is a distinction that we cannot see, which it is not for us to try and make manifest, lest, haply, in endeavoring to root up the tares, we root up the wheat also. There is an unseen church that becomes visible in heaven, which will be apparent and manifest at the coming of the Son of man. This it is that Christ loved, and for which He gave Himself.

Now, observe what this church was *by nature*...The church that Christ loved was in her origin as sinful as the rest of the human race. Have the damned in hell fallen through Adam's transgression? So had the saved in glory once. The sin that was imputed to lost spirits was equally and with as fatal consequences imputed to them; had it not been for the incoming of the covenant head, the second Adam, they had forever suffered with the rest. They, too, were alike depraved in nature. Is the heart deceitful above all things in the unregenerate? So it is in the elect before regeneration. Was the will perverse? Was the understanding darkened? Was the whole head sick and the whole heart faint in the case of those who continued in sin? It was just the same at first with those who have been by sovereign grace taken into the heart of Christ. "We were," says the apostle, "by nature the children of wrath even as others." Remember that between the brightest saint in heaven and the blackest sinner in hell, *there is no difference except that which Christ has made*. Had those glorified ones been left to continue in their natural state, they would have sinned as foully and as constantly as the worst of sinners have done. To begin with, there is no difference between the elect and the non-elect. They are all alike fallen: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom 3:12).

Nay, more—this church of Christ is made up of persons who are *actually defiled* by their own transgressions. Are you and I members of

that church? Ah, then, we are compelled to confess that in us by nature dwelt all manner of [lust], vileness, and an evil heart of unbelief, ever prone to depart from the living God and to rebel against the Most High. And what since have we done? Or rather, what have we not done?

We did not all fall into the same vices, but still when the black catalogue of sin is read, we have to weep over it, and to say, “Such were some of us.” But why we should make a part of Christ’s church is a question that never can be answered except with this one reply: “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Mat 11:26). Do the wicked sink to hell with their sins like millstones about their necks? We should have sunk there too, and as rapidly and as fatally, unless eternal love had said, “Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom.” Look at Christ’s church as you see her visibly in the world, and I ask you, brethren, though she has much about her that is admirable, whether there is not much that might cause her Lord to cast her away. Even in her regenerate estate, she speaks truly when she says she is “black as the tents of Kedar” (Song 1:5).

Mark the hypocrites that come into the Christian church and that mar her purity. Observe the formalists that crowd her courts, that sit as God’s people sit, and sing as God’s people sing, but have hearts full of rottenness and villainy. Observe even the true saints—how unbelieving, how carnally-minded often, how childish, how ready to murmur against God! How few of them are fathers in Israel! When they ought to be teachers, they have need to be instructed in the first elements of the faith. What heresies come into the church, and how many unstable minds are carried away with them. What divisions there are! How one saith, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” and a third, “I am of Christ” (1Co 1:12). What envyings there are, what backbitings of those that are eminent for usefulness. What suspicions against those who are a little more zealous than their fellows! My brethren, what a lack of affection we can see in the church of Christ; how little brotherly kindness, how little sympathy. On the other hand, how much of pride is discovered...How we find some claiming to be lords in God’s heritage and taking to themselves names and titles to which they have no right, seeing that “One is our Master,” and we are not to be called “Rabbi” among men. When I look at the church even with a blinded eye, having no power to see her as God’s omniscient eye must see, yet is she covered with spots. Well may she wear her veil and say, “Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me” (Song 1:6). O church of

God, how is it Jesus Christ could love thee, for even in thy church-capacity and church-estate how much there is that could make Him say, "Thou art reprobate silver; thou shalt be cast into the fire" (*see Jer 6:30*). Lo, how much there is that must make Him say of thee, "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?...It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (*Luk 14:34; Mat 5:13*).

And yet you see, dear friends, it is written that Christ loved His church, and gave Himself for it. I think I see it—a piece of ground untilled; neither hedged, nor walled, not covered with vines, nor redolent with the perfume of sweet flowers, but it is a spot in the wilderness, filled with the thorn, the thistle, and the brier; her hedges are broken down; the stones of her wall are scattered; the wild boar out of the wood wasteth her; all kinds of unclean creatures lurk among her weeds and brambles. Oh, how is it, Thou Lord of glory, that Thou couldst buy, at the price of Thy heart's blood, such a waste piece of ground as that? What couldst Thou see in that garden that Thou shouldst determine to make it the fairest spot of all the earth, that should yield Thee the richest of all fruit?

Methinks, again, I see the church of God, not as a fair maid decorated for the marriage-day with jewels, and carrying herself right gloriously both in her person and her apparel; but I see her as a helpless child, neglected by her parents, cast out, unwashed, unclothed, left uncared for, and covered with her filth and blood. No eye pities her, no arm comes to bring her salvation. But the eye of the Lord Jesus looks upon that infant and straightway love beams forth from that eye, speaks from that lip, and acts through that hand. He says, "Live!" and the helpless infant is cared for: she is nurtured; she is decked with dainty apparel; she is fed, clothed, sustained, and made comely through the comeliness of Him Who chose her at the first. Thus it is that strong love moved the grace of God, and the church found that Christ gave Himself for it.

I must not, however, leave this point without just reminding you of what kind of love it is that Jesus Christ gives to this church. You perceive it is the love of a husband. Now, the love of a husband is *special*. Those gentlemen who think that Christ did not love the church more than He loved the rest of the world must have a very [strange] idea of how a husband ought to love his wife, for it says, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church." Surely a husband ought to love his wife more than he loves other people! Therefore, Christ cherishes for the church a special, particular affection, which is set upon

her rather than upon the rest of mankind. The Lord has set His church as much above the rest of the world, as He has fixed His own throne above the kings and princes of this lower earth; and the day shall come when she, “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners” (Song 6:10), shall be recognized as being the favorite of heaven, the peculiar treasure of Christ—His regalia, the crown of His head, the bracelet of His arm, the breastplate of His heart, the very center and core of His own love. Let us not cavil at this truth, for it is exceedingly precious. Let us seek the honey out of it and believe that Christ loves the church with a special love.

Again, a husband loves his wife with a *constant* love, and so does Christ His church. He will not cast her away tomorrow having loved her today. He does not vary in His affection. He may change in His display of affection, but the affection itself is still the same. A husband loves his wife with an *enduring* love; it never will die out. He says, “Till death us do part will I cherish thee”; but Christ will not even let death part His love to His people. Nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:39). A husband loves his wife with a *hearty* love, with a love that is true and intense. It is not mere lip service. He does not merely speak, but he acts; he is ready to provide for her wants; he will defend her character; he will vindicate her honor because his heart is set upon her! It is not merely with the eye that he delighteth now and then to glance upon her, but his soul hath her continually in his remembrance: she has a mansion in his heart from whence she can never be cast away. She has become a portion of himself; she is a member of his body; she is part of his flesh and of his bones; and so is the church to Christ for ever, an eternal spouse...

Now let us leave this point, only reminding you again, that this church is only a church of Christ because He has made her so. She had no right or title to His affection; He loved her because He chose to do so; and having once loved her, He never will divorce her: she shall be His, world without end.

From a sermon delivered on Sunday morning, May 7, 1865,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



A HUSBAND'S PRAYER

George Swinnock (1627–1673)

I pray that my love to my wife may be like Christ's to His church, as well in its goodness as in its greatness; I mean, that my chiefest endeavor may be that she may be sanctified and cleansed and at last be presented to the blessed and beautiful bridegroom, a gracious and glorious spouse without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Oh, how industriously did my Redeemer endeavor His church's renovation and sanctity! How affectionately doth He beseech her to be holy! How fervently doth He beg of His Father to make her holy! How willingly did He broach His heart and pour out His blood to wash her from her unholiness! How plentifully doth He pour down His Spirit to work her to holiness! His birth was that she might be born again, and born holy; His life was to set her a copy of holiness; His death was to purchase for her a new stock of holiness. He gave Himself for her that He might redeem her from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. His precepts, His prayers, His tears, His blood, His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection, His intercession are all for her holiness and purity. His name is called Jesus because He saves His people, not in, but from, their sins and unholiness. He doth not think Himself [complete] until His body [the church] be in heaven.

O my soul, when wilt thou imitate this lovely, lively pattern, and work hard in thy petitions to God, and woo hard in thy persuasions to thy wife that she may be pure! Doth not thine heart ache to think that the object of thy dearest love and favor should be the object of God's greatest hatred and fury? that the companion of thy youth, who hath lain in thy bosom, whom thou hast so often embraced, should be a companion of frightful devils and lie in the lake of fire and brimstone forever and ever? Canst thou see thy wife posting in the way of perdition, hastening to hell, and never warn her of her danger, or ask her why she doth so? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Ah, where [is thy heart]?

Lord, since Thou hast called me to be the head, help me to guide and direct, to see and speak, both to Thy Majesty in humble supplications, and to her in hearty and serious expostulations,¹ that I may be

¹ **expostulations** – expressions of strong disapproval or disagreement.

ministerially what Thy Son is meritoriously—the savior of my body. I have found a costly feast in my Father’s family; the house is not so full but still there is room. There is nothing lacking but comers and company, and shall I suffer one so near me to starve for lack of knowledge where it is to be had? Oh, let Thy goodness to me cause me to persuade, and let Thy goodness to her enable me to prevail that she may taste and see that Thou art gracious!

I wish that I may naturally give the honey of sweetness and love, yet when provoked by sin against God, the sting of reproof that I may bear with my wife in all things save wickedness. If I nourish her natural diseases, I kill her body. If I cherish her spiritual distempers,² I damn her soul. And shall I, through cursed fondness, flatter her into the unquenchable fire? Lord, cause me not only to wink at her weaknesses and to hide them from the world’s eye, but also to observe any wickedness she shall be guilty of and to set it so in order before her eyes that Thou mayest cast it behind Thy back. Yea, Lord, help me to hearken to all her holy counsels and to hear Thee speaking by her, as well as to desire her to hearken to me; but let me never submit to any wicked advice, lest Thou judge me at last, as Thou didst Adam at first, for hearkening to the voice of my wife.

I wish that I may not [be] as some husbands, who dwell with their wives as brutes, understanding nothing in marriage but the meaning of carnal desires and the language of lust, yet deal worse with the wives of their bosoms than with their beasts and deny them what is convenient for their outward wellbeing; but that both my person and portion may be for her comfort in health, for her cordial³ in sickness, and employed upon all occasions, though not for the pampering of her pride or nourishment of any sin, yet in a moderate way for her service.

When my God gave Himself to my soul, He gave me all He had also and thought nothing too much for me. And shall I, who have not spared myself from her, think everything too good for her? If she brought a portion, what is become of it? Was it laid out to purchase her misery and poverty? If she did not, yet she is my wife, and both nature and Scripture command me to allow her answerable to my wealth and her [needs]. Oh, that I might be as Elkanah to Hannah, better to her than ten sons, than all relations. Lord, whilst I live, make me so loving and industrious that rather myself than my wife

² **distempers** – diseases; ill health.

³ **cordial** – medicine.

may lack. Let her body never want food and raiment, nor her soul the gospel feast, or the robes of Thy Son's righteousness. And when I die, whomsoever I neglect, if by Thy providence I am able, let me make for her a comfortable provision that when I am happy in heaven, my other half may not, through my unworthiness, be miserable on earth. If it be Thy pleasure that I shall die poor—for my portion, through infinite grace, is not in this life—then let it please Thy Majesty to grant me this mercy: that I may leave my fatherless children with Thee and bid my widow trust in Thee. Let not my Lord be angry, and I will speak further on her behalf. In what need soever I shall leave this world, let me leave my wife the poor, or rather the rich, Levite's portion, that though she hath no part or inheritance here below, (Num 18:20), yet Thou Thyself mayest be the portion of her cup and the lot of her inheritance. Oh, then the lines will fall to her in pleasant places, and she will have a goodly heritage.

Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes. Let not my Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Do Thou so adorn me with grace, suitable to this relation as a bridegroom is decked with ornaments, that when I cease to be a husband, I may know what it is to be the bride, the Lamb's wife (Hos 2:19), not as I do in this imperfect condition, where Thou hast only betrothed me unto Thyself in righteousness and judgment, and in lovingkindness and in mercy, and so whilst I am present in the body I am absent from the Lord; but in the highest degree, in that place where Thou wilt marry me to Thyself forever. Kiss me with the sweetest kisses of Thy lips, lodge me all night between Thy breasts, where is the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the true bridegroom and the voice of the true bride; where is the voice of them that say and sing, "Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever" (Jer 33:11). Amen.

From *The Works of George Swinnock*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: James Nichol, James Nisbet and Co.; G. Herbert, 1868), 497-502, in the public domain.

George Swinnock (1627–1673): Puritan preacher educated at Cambridge and Oxford; born in Maidstone, Kent, England, UK.



It is certain the love of a husband to his wife should be above his love to all his relations. Next to God and Christ and his own salvation, his wife calls for the hottest and strongest affection.

—*George Swinnock*