

*First Sabbath after the Sacrament, Simprin, Feb. 9, 1707.*

THE SOUL'S ESPOUSAL TO CHRIST.

SERMON II.

2 CORINTHIANS, xi. 2,

*For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

IT was a matter of great importance we were about last Sabbath, espousing poor sinners to the Son of God. But the bride is apt to forget, till she be brought home, and therefore we would put you in mind of it.

In this verse, the apostle shows how he stood affected to them. "He was jealous over them with a godly jealousy." The cause of this jealousy was the danger in which they were, notwithstanding the great length he had brought them. Their danger is specified, verse 3. The length he had brought them is in the text, in which we have his success, "he had espoused them to one husband," and the design of it, "that he might present them as a chaste virgin to Christ." These words I explained, and insisted on the first clause of the verse, at another occasion of this nature.

DOCTRINE I. Sometimes ministers get the treaty of marriage betwixt their Master and their people brought such a length, that they can say they have got the espousals made, and that with a design that they may get the bride, as a chaste virgin, to present to the bridegroom, when the great marriage day shall come.

In treating this subject, I shall,

I. Explain a little, this match betwixt Christ and his people.

I shall view it in these six degrees :

1. The first degree of it was the design and purpose of that match, in the heart of God, from all eternity. It is no new thing. It is older than heaven and earth. God hath had an eternity to think upon it, and never saw reason to alter his purpose. Concerning this, we may notice three things. 1. God seeing all mankind in a lost state, was pleased from eternity to have mercy upon, and to love those freely, who in time are brought to Christ. "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world. God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." He loved them, when there was nothing appearing in

them lovely. Man considered as innocent, was loved, but he soon ceased to be the object of that love, law-love. But God took man at his worst, and loved him then with a love of good-will, which set his mercy on work. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." 2. Those whom he loved, he designed to everlasting life, made choice of them to be his sons, heirs of the heavenly inheritance. He selected them out of the midst of shipwrecked mankind, fully purposing to bring them to Immanuel's land. 3. Those whom he thus chose, he gave them to Christ, to be his spouse in time, to be redeemed and saved by him. "Thine they were," saith Jesus, "and thou gavest them me." Christ accepted of them, upon the terms fixed by the Father, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." He needed them not, he was to buy them dear, yet he consents, and therefore they are called his people, Psal. cx. 3.

2. The removal of the lawful impediments of this match betwixt the Son of God and sinners. When this purpose was proclaimed in heaven, there appeared to object against the match, the justice, law, and truth of God. Justice says, the Mediator is God, and there can be no match betwixt God and guilty man, till I be satisfied. The law says, they are mine, and I will not part with them, till death part us. Truth says, God himself made this marriage betwixt them and the law, and therefore they cannot be married to another, unless first death dissolve the marriage. But the designed bridegroom will not let the marriage go back, and therefore he removes these impediments, by his obedience to the law, and by his death in our nature, and in our stead, which he did and suffered as a public person, even as Adam sinned, Gal. ii. 20. By this means justice is satisfied, and so content the match go on. "For," saith God, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The sinner dies to the law in Christ, and the law dies to the sinner. "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." And so the parties being thus dead, the truth of God has nothing to object against the purpose of this new marriage.

3. The contract is written, drawn, and ready for the subscribing. "He hath made with me," says David, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Ordered, or prepared. And there are two things in the contract, 1. Christ's consent to match

with poor sinners, to give himself to the captive daughter of Zion for a husband, notwithstanding she be ill-favoured and unworthy; Rev. xxii. 17. There is next the dowry promised to the bride, and that is all things with him: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things," even all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, grace and glory, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. A large maintenance, and a good house; John xiv. 3. Yea, the contract is subscribed by the bridegroom and his Father. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." The contract is also sealed. "This cup," saith the bridegroom, "is the New Testament in my blood." All this before famous witnesses, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." The whole is registered in this Bible.

But is not this strange work, to write, and sign, and seal the contract, before the bride's consent be obtained, yea, before she be courted? ANSWER. The reason of this is, it is one of the articles, that the bridegroom shall gain the bride's consent. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Again, The bride hath nothing, for which to contract, and he looks for as little with her. She hath nothing in her, nor upon her, and can bring nothing with her, but debt, wants, poverty, and misery, and he is willing to take her as she is; Ezek. xvi. 1—14.

4. The courting of the bride, in order to gain her consent. And this courtship is managed in two places. *First*, Christ comes into her mother's house, to the public ordinances, and there he, by his ambassadors, courteth her consent. In the public ordinances there is a good report given of Christ, his willingness is declared, sinners are invited, exhorted, obtested to give away themselves to him; there is a moral force used upon them by arguments, "compelling them to come in, that his house may be filled." *Secondly*, Christ comes into the chambers of their heart, and then there is a heart conference betwixt Christ and the soul, without which the former cannot prevail, and here do pass these five things. 1. The Lord discovers to the soul its lost and undone condition; that like the prodigal, Luke xv. it is perishing with hunger. 2. The Lord tells the soul that its other lovers will ruin it. Sin will damn the soul,

the law will never be satisfied with all that the soul can do. 3. The Lord tells them that he is willing. 4. He discovers himself in his beauty. *Lastly*, He reveals, stretches out his arm, and lays hold on the sinner in the day of power. "The soul is apprehended of Christ Jesus." And then follows,

5. The espousals. The soul being overcome, gives its consent to take Christ for a husband, renouncing all others. The soul makes choice of Christ. With the whole soul, the soul makes choice of a whole Christ. Their great desire is, "to be found in him, not having on their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. They esteem him altogether lovely in his person and in his offices. They can want none of him. Again, they make choice of him all, for all, and instead of all, saying, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire, besides thee." According to the law of marriage they cleave unto him, forgetting also their own people, and their father's house. Their choice of him is for ever, in all times and cases, even beyond the limits of time, taking him to be the strength of their heart, and their portion for ever. The soul gives itself away to Christ. Servants give work for wages, and masters give wages for work. Suitors give tokens and pledges to draw on love; but husbands and wives give themselves to one another, and this is a blessed day. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

*Lastly*, The consummation of the marriage betwixt Christ and the soul. The espousals are in this life, at our believing, the marriage is consummated in glory. Then shall be heard the shout, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Now the espoused bride shall be presented to Christ, as the bride to the bridegroom, in the marriage day by her friends. Hence Christ is represented as coming at the last day, as a bridegroom to the marriage, with his espoused wife. Matth. xxv. 1—5. Then shall the mystery be finished, and the copestone be laid upon the great design of God in the gospel.

Now there is a time betwixt the espousals and marriage :

1. This time is for the trial of the bride. "And I said unto her thou shalt abide for me many days, thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee." In the meantime, the old lovers will come back again, and endeavour to recover her affections which they have lost, and often do

they so succeed, that they get hold again of some who were never sincere in their espousals, but others remain firm.

2. This interval is, that the bride may make herself ready. As the espoused virgin takes up her time providing for the marriage, so the soul by making progress in sanctification, dying more and more unto their lusts, is prepared for the consummation of the marriage in heaven. I proceed,

II. To shew what hand ministers have in this match.

1. They are proxies for the bridegroom, sent as Abraham's servant, to seek a wife for their master's son; because he is a king, yea, the prince of the kings of the earth. They are ambassadors, and that of peace; 2 Cor. v. 18—20. Their work is to commend their Lord, and to gain the bride's consent.

2. They are witnesses, though not to the formal consent, yet to that which imports a consent. They see how their message is entertained, though indeed they may be so far deceived, as to take a feigned for an unfeigned consent.

3. They are the attendants of the bride, to adorn her for her husband. It is by the word, that the espoused soul is made clean, and fitted for Christ, as the Greek word in our text signifies.

*Lastly*, The text tells us of another part of their work, namely, their presenting her to the bridegroom at the last day. This may import their joyful account of their ministry to their master at his coming, when they shall be able to say, Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me. "For," says Paul, "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming; For ye are our glory and joy." Let us now,

III. Inquire why the Lord employs men in this great and honourable work.

1. It is in condescension to our infirmities. If God had employed angels, how would we have been able to have looked upon them. Manoah and his wife, fell on their faces to the ground, when they saw the conduct of the angel that appeared to them, Judges xiii. Ever since sin entered the world, commerce with spirits is dreadful to men; but here, men of like passions with ourselves, transact this most important matter.

2. It is very agreeable, in regard God is in Christ, and the divine nature united with the human nature, that therefore men should deal with men, to bring them to the man Christ.

3. That God may have all the glory. Were angels employed to espouse souls to Christ, it would be thought that the power was from them; but the more contemptible the instruments are the more does the power appear to be of God, and not of us.

DOCTRINE II. That the great design of espousing sinners to Christ here, is that they continuing chaste and faithful to Christ after the espousals, may at last be presented to Christ, to be married to him in heaven his Father's house. Here we shall,

I. Inquire what it is for the espoused to keep chaste.

II. Consider the presenting of the espoused that keep chaste, to Christ. We are then,

I. To inquire what it is for the espoused to keep chaste.

1. They must never be called by another name than their espoused husband. They must hold fast their profession, come what will, Heb. x. 23. The company standing with the Lamb on mount Zion, "have his Father's name written in their foreheads, and they have not defiled themselves with women: for they are virgins: these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." It must be known by our profession, to whom we belong, thinking no shame to own him before the world. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Matth. x. 31—33.

2. They must never go back to their former husband, for the soul that is really espoused to Christ, is divorced from idols and lusts, and therefore must not go back to them. "As obedient children, not fashioning themselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance." This gauding after other lovers, is breaking to the heart of Christ, Ezek. vi. 6; and the soul giving up itself to them again, Christ gives up with that soul, saying, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." So we must resolve that we will not go back from Christ, but say, "quicken us, and we will call upon thy name."

The soul espoused indeed to Christ, is divorced not only from lusts and idols, but also divorced from the law, and we must not go back to it again. "Wherefore my brethren," says Paul, "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." Now the soul returns to that husband first, when it acts from the law in duty, that is, when they are actuated by the influence of the covenant of works, being stirred up to duty, only from hope of reward, and fear of punishment. The soul also returns to this husband, when it acts for the law, making duties our righteousness before God, and going about to procure the favour of God by them. On the contrary, the chaste soul acts from Christ out of love to him, and in his strength: and for Christ, to his glory. Believers are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew

forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Christ must always have our hearts, our love, and the chief room in our affections. "If any man," saith Jesus, "come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Whether they be lawful, or unlawful comforts, if they have more of our hearts than Christ, we are unfaithful to our espoused husband, and "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Never do any faithfully give themselves away to Christ, but they have seen more beauty in him than in any other, and therefore he will have their chief love.

4. They must cleave to Christ, over the belly of all the world's smiles and frowns also. They must neither be bribed, nor driven from him. Song viii. 6, 7. Christ's spouse may lay her account with flatteries, to draw her away from Christ; but as "Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, so ought all his people to do." They will meet also with threatenings, and persecutions, and afflictions, but all they have must be at his service, they must part with their very lives to preserve their chastity, if called to it.

5. They must be separated from the world: not only from the world in their hearts, but from the men of the world, in their practices; therefore they are held forth, Rev. xiv. 4, as a company selected out from among the rest of the world; and they are enjoined "not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind." To be like the world, neighbour and other, will not do. They must no longer, as in time past, walk according to the course of this world. They must cleave to the purity of the gospel, in doctrine, worship, and practice.

*Finally,* They must be sincere and upright. "And in their mouth was no guile; for they are without fault before God." Chaste virgins are like Nathaniel, without guile. Hypocrisy would spoil all. Our espoused husband is a searcher of hearts, and will not be put off with vain pretences. We now proceed,

II. To consider the presenting to Christ of those that keep chaste. Concerning this, I would notice these six things:

1. The time of it, it will be at the great day. When Christ comes as Judge to others, he will come as a bridegroom to his own. Matt. xxv. 1—12. At death they are presented to him, and received into glory; but then both soul and body shall be glorified.

2. They, and they only, that keep chaste, shall be presented to

Christ, as to a bridegroom, in order to marriage. The high priest, under the law, was not to marry a whore. They that shall depart from Christ, shall be made to depart from him there. "For there shall in no wise enter into heaven any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." But the chaste virgins shall be brought to the king, Psalm xlv. And it must needs be so, for it is not consistent with his honour to take others, and not consistent with his faithfulness to forsake them.

3. The house out of which the bride shall go, even out of a grave, or out of the world, this earth. Some will be found alive when the bridegroom comes, they shall be changed; some in their graves, they shall be raised. Out of prison they go to reign.

4. The bride's attendants. A glorious company shall be with her, when she is to be presented to the bridegroom. Angels shall attend her, they that were witnesses to her espousals, shall also be witnesses to her marriage. And O what a joyful day will it be, when Christ's ministers shall say, here are we, and the children thou hast given us.

5. The place where the bride shall be presented to the bridegroom, "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord." Christ will thus come more than half way to meet her. And O what a joyful meeting will that be.

*Lastly*, The place where the marriage shall be solemnized, that is the bridegroom's father's house, even in heaven. "Then shall they be ever with the Lord." O blessed espousals to Christ, but yet there is a great difference betwixt the espousals and the marriage, as 1. The espousals are made on earth, but the marriage in heaven. They are probably espoused in the temple below, but the marriage is in the temple above.

2. There is a mixed multitude at the espousals, but not so at the marriage. Many put their hands to the pen, and sign the contract, who are not divorced from their other lovers; but there the door is shut, and none but chaste virgins admitted.

3. The bridegroom appears beautiful at the espousals, but far more beautiful at the marriage, for then they shall see him as he is, and shall say, the half has not been told.

4. The bride contracts with him in a sorry state, giving away herself to him, that he may make her beautiful. But at the marriage, the bride shall be adorned, not only with a perfect imputed righteousness, but also with a perfect inherent righteousness. The Lamb's wife shall then "have made herself ready, and shall appear



arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." No spot, no wrinkle in the bride, but she shall be holy, and without blemish.

5. Many a time, the bride at the espousals gives away herself to Christ with sorrow in her heart, tears in her eyes, and with a trembling hand signs the contract, for fear she mismanage it, or that the bridegroom will not take her, but then all these things shall be gone. "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

6. At the espousals, the bride sometimes gets some little gifts to rejoice her heart; but then she shall get a fulness of joy, of which she is not now capable.

*Lastly*, After the espousals she is in hazard. There are many to attempt her chastity now, but after the marriage she shall never be in hazard any more.

USE 1. Remember that I have espoused you to Christ, and that now you are no more your own but his. There was a solemn day of espousals to Christ here, last Sabbath, and then we got you espoused to our Master. Let us reflect on this a little.

1. Was there not an offer of Christ, made to all communicants and hearers, in Simprin kirk, and Simprin byre, that day. Were you not told he was willing, and it should be a bargain, if you were willing also.

2. Was there any one in either of the places of worship, that said they would not take him? Did any say we have loved idols, and will go after them? Did you not sit and stand there as his people? Why did you crowd in, was it to protest against Christ, we heard no such thing; Nay, did not your heart say within you, even so I take him.

3. Did we not bring out the contract to you and read it, that you might know what you were doing? Did you not hear the articles, that you behoved to part with sin and the world? and yet after all there were none of you said that you were against the bargain.

4. Did we not put the pen into the hands of many of you, gave you the bread and wine, the symbols of Christ's body and blood? Christ was exhibited in that sacrament. Wherefore was it, but that you might subscribe the contract.

*Lastly*, Did we not see you sign the contract, give away yourselves to Christ, and take the sacrament of his body and blood upon it? Witness then, O heavens! witness O earth! witness O angels! Be ye witnesses, O stones and wood of Simprin kirk and byre, and we ourselves are witnesses, that upon the second day of February, 1707, we espoused this people unto our Master Christ.

USE 2. And now I have but one request to you. Behave in such a manner, as you may be presented as a chaste virgin, to Christ the bridegroom, at the great day. "Little children keep yourselves from

idols." Keep the chief room in your heart for Christ, and let not your garments again be defiled. Consider, last Sabbath you were beginning a work for eternity, why did you consent to the espousals, if you have not a mind for the marriage; and surely you cannot think to go a-whoring from your espoused husband, unless you mind never to be presented to him for the marriage. Alas! I fear we will lose of our account, when the day comes for presenting the bride. Suppose you heard Christ, at that day, say to us, What! did you espouse no more to me, than these? and us to answer, Lord, we espoused many more to thee, but they afterwards went back to their lusts, now they are amissing, and we dare not present them, because they have not kept chaste.

OBJECTION. Alas! it is impossible for us to keep free of sin. ANSWER. It is not every slip that will denominate you unchaste. Let it be the constant bent of your souls to keep faithful to Christ. Struggle against sin; and if you do, though it may prevail, yet it shall not prevent your acceptance, while you flee to the blood of Christ. You may say with David, "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Remember the case of the betrothed damsel, Deut. xxii. 25, 26. Amen.

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*Galashiels, Saturday, September 21, 1723.*

SERVING THE LORD IN HOLINESS.

SERMON III.

LUKE i. 74, 75,

*That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.*

THE covenant of grace is the great contrivance for salvation to lost sinners; it is the chariot in which Christ carries home his bride to his Father's house in heaven, Song iii. 9, 10. The gospel is the proclamation, and free offer of this covenant to all. Faith is the taking hold of this covenant, the embracing it, the sinner's personal entering into it, the coming up into the chariot. The sacraments are the seals of this covenant. Our text is the import and substance of this covenant, shewing what is offered to you all in the