

## A WEDDING SERMON.

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*And brought her unto the man.*—GEN. II. 22.

THE words belong to the story of the first marriage that ever was celebrated in the world, between the first man and the first woman; a marriage made by God himself in paradise, who, when he built the rib taken from Adam into a woman, from a builder becometh her bringer: *He brought her unto the man*, saith the text.

God's bringing Eve to Adam implieth five things:—

1. His permission, allowance, and grant; for that Adam might thankfully acknowledge the benefit as coming from God, God himself brought her; whether in a visible shape, as prefiguring Christ's incarnation, and with what ceremony he brought her—since the Holy Ghost hath not expressed it, I shall not now inquire; it is enough that God brought her to give her to him as his inseparable companion and meet-helper. This bringing was the full bestowing her upon him, that they should live together as man and wife.

2. His institution and appointment of marriage as the means of propagating mankind. God's *adduxit* is, by our Saviour's interpretation, *conjunxit*: Mat. xix. 6, 'Those whom God hath joined together,' &c. Otherwise what need this bringing, for she was created just by him in paradise, when Adam was fallen into a deep sleep; not in another place; which showeth that marriage is an honourable estate. God was the first author of it; his act hath the force of an institution.

3. For the greater solemnity and comely order of marriage. Adam did not take her of his own head, but God brought her to him. When we dispose of ourselves at our own wills and pleasures, being led thereunto by our own choice, without consulting with God, or upon carnal reasons, without the conduct of God's providence, we transgress the order which God hath set in the first precedent of marriage, and cannot expect that our coming together should be comfortable. Much more doth it condemn the unnatural filthiness of whoredom, whereby men and women join and mingle themselves together without God, the devil and their inordinate lusts leading them. God would not put Adam and Eve together without some regard, as he did the brutish and unreasonable creatures; but doth solemnly, as it were, bring the manness by the hand to the man, and deliver her into his hands, having a more honourable regard and care of them. God cannot abide that brutish coming together as the horses do, neighing, in the rage of unbridled lusts, upon their mates, Jer. v. 8. No; Adam stayeth till

she is brought to him. This honour and special favour God vouchsafeth mankind above all other creatures; he himself, in his own person, maketh the match, and bringeth them together.

4. To dispense his blessing to them. The woman was created on the sixth day, as appeareth Gen. i.; and it is said that when he had 'created them male and female, he blessed them,' ver. 28. He doth enlarge things here, and explaineth what there he had touched briefly. When he had made the woman, he brought her to the man, and blessed them both together; showing thereby that when any enter into this estate, they should take God's blessing along with them, upon whose favour the comfort of this relation doth wholly depend. Those whom God bringeth into it are likely to fare best, and they that resign themselves up into his hands, to be disposed of by him, surely take the readiest way to obtain the happiness they expect.

5. For a pattern of providence in all after-times. It is worth the observing, that Christ reasoning against polygamy, from ver. 24, compared with Mat. xix. God having abundance of the spirit, as the prophet speaks, Mal. ii. 15, brought the woman to one man, though there was more cause of giving Adam many wives for the speedier peopling of the world, than there could be to any of his posterity. As Christ observeth the number, so we may observe the thing itself. It is God's work still to give every one his marriage companion; he bringeth the woman to the husband, and every husband to his wife, that meet as they ought to do. His providence doth mightily and evidently govern all circumstances that concern this affair, as we shall show you by and by.

The point which I shall insist on is this:—

*Doct.* That marriages are then holily entered into, when the parties take one another out of God's hands.

I. I will show you in what sense they are said to take one another out of God's hands.

II. Why this is so necessary to be observed.

I. For the first, they take one another out of God's hands two ways.

1. When his directions are observed.

2. When his providence is owned and acknowledged.

1. When his directions in his word are observed; and so—

[1.] As to the choice of parties. When a man seeketh out a helpmeet for himself, he should in the first place seek out a helpmeet for himself in the best things; for in all our deliberate and serious consultations, religion must have the first place: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof,' &c. A man's chief end should be discovered in all his actions, as it must guide me in my meat, and drink, and recreations, and the ordinary refreshments of the natural life, or else I do not act as a Christian. So much more in my most important and serious affairs, such as marriage is, and upon which my content and welfare so much dependeth. Certainly, he that would take God's blessing along with him, should make choice, in God's family, of one with whom he may converse as an heir with him of the grace of life. A Christian, saith the apostle, is at liberty to marry, *ἀλλὰ μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ*, 'but only in the Lord,' 1 Cor

vii. 39; he is at liberty to rejoice, but in the Lord; to eat, and drink and trade, but in the Lord; so to marry, but in the Lord. Religion must appear uppermost in all his actions, and guide him throughout. The mischiefs that have come by a carnal choice should be sufficient warning to Christians: Gen. vi. 2, 'The sons of God went in unto the daughters of men, and took them wives, because they were fair.' They were swayed by carnal motives (or because rich, or nobly descended, it is all one), and what was the issue of it? There came of them a mongrel race of giants, that rose up against God and his interest in the world. Many times, by a carnal choice, all the good that is gotten into a family is eaten out, and within a little while religion is cast out of doors: Ps. cvi. 35, 'They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works;' Neh. xiii. 25, 26, 'I contended with them, and made them swear by God, Ye shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons;' 2 Kings viii. 18, 'He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife.' Valens, the emperor, married with an Arian lady, and so was ensnared so far as to become a persecutor of the orthodox. The wife of the bosom hath great advantages, either to the perverting or the converting a man's heart to God; or else, if they should not prevail so far, what dissonancy and jarrings are there in a family when people are unequally yoked, the wife and husband drawing several ways!

[2.] As to consent of parents. God here in the text, as the common parent, taketh himself to have the greatest hand in the bestowing of his own children. He brought her unto the man; and ordinary parents are his deputies, which must bring and give us in marriage, especially when young, and under their power. The scripture is express for this: Exod. xxii. 17, 'If her father wholly refuse to give her unto him,' &c.; 1 Cor. vii. 38, 'He that giveth her in marriage,' &c.

[3.] As to the manner of procuring it, that they labour to gain one another by warrantable, yea, religious ways, that we may lay the foundation of this relation in the fear of God; not by stealth, or carnal allurements, or violent importunities, or deceitful proposals, but by such ways and means as will become the gravity of religion; that weanedness and sobriety that should be in the hearts of believers; that deliberation which a business of such weight calls for; and that reverence of God, and justice that we owe to all; that seriousness of spirit, and that respect to the glory of God with which all such actions should be undertaken: Col. iii. 17, 'Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.' When this is observed, we are said to take one another out of God's hands.

[4.] Especially clearing up our right and title by Christ. Meats, drinks, marriage, they are all sanctified by the word and prayer, and appointed to be received by thanksgiving of them that believe and receive the truth, 1 Tim. iv. 3-5. There is a twofold right—*dominium politicum et evangelicum*; *dominium politicum fundatur in providentiâ, evangelicum in gratiâ*—political right is founded in God's providence, evangelical right in grace. We have a civil right to all that cometh to us by honest labour, lawful purchase, or inheritance, and fair and comely means used; which giveth us a right not only be-

fore men, but before God ; not by virtue of their laws, but his grant. By a providential right, all wicked men possess all outward things, which they enjoy as the fruits and gifts of his common bounty, it is their portion, Ps. xvii. 14. Whatever falleth to their share in the course of God's providence, they are not usurpers merely for possessing what they have, but for abusing what they have. They have not only a civil right to prevent the encroachments of others by the laws of men, but a providential right before God, and are not simply responsible for the possession, but the use. But then there is an evangelical or new-covenant right. So believers have a right to their creature comforts by God's special conveyance, that sweeteneth every mercy, that it comes wrapt in the bowels of Christ. 'The little which the righteous hath is better than the treasures of many wicked ;' as the mean fare of a poor subject is better than the dainties of a condemned traitor. And this we have by Christ, as the heir of all things, and we by him, 1 Cor. iii. latter end. So all those things do belong to them that believe, as gifts of his fatherly love and goodness to us in Christ. As we take our bread out of Christ's hands, so we must be married to Christ before married to one another ; the marriage covenant should be begun and concluded between Christ and you.

[5.] For the end. The general and last end of this, as of every action, must be God's glory, 1 Cor. x. 31, and Col. iii. 17. A Christian's second-table duties and first-table duties should have on them HOLINESS TO THE LORD. All the vessels of Jerusalem must have God's impress. More particularly our increase in godliness, and the propagation of the holy seed must be aimed at. Where one person is a believer, much more where both, they beget sons and daughters to God ; 'but now are they holy,' 1 Cor. vii. 14. But those out of the church beget sons and daughters to men, merely to people the world. Seth's children are called 'sons of God,' Gen. vi. 1, 2. In the careful education of children, the church is upheld.

2. When his providence is owned and acknowledged. It is the duty of them that fear God to own him upon all occasions, especially in such a business. Heathens would not begin such a business without a sacrifice. There is a special providence about marriages. God claimeth the power of match-making to himself, more than he doth of ordering any other affairs of men : Prov. xix. 14, 'Riches and honours are an inheritance from our fathers ; but a good wife is from the Lord.' Inheritances pass by the laws of men, though not without the intervention of God's providence, who determineth to every man the time of his service, and the bounds of his habitation, where every man shall live, and what he shall enjoy. The land of Canaan was divided by lot ; but marriage is by the special destination of his providence, either for a punishment to men, or for a comfort and a blessing. Here providence is more immediate, by its influence upon the hearts of men ; here providence is more strange and remarkable, in casting all circumstances and passages that did concern it. Estates fall to us by more easy and obvious means, and, therefore, though nothing be exempted from dominion of providence, yet a good wife is especially said to be of the Lord. So also Prov. xviii. 22, 'Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.' A wife,

that is a wife indeed—one that deserveth that name—he that findeth her, it is a chance to him, but an ordered thing by God. He hath not only experience of God's care, but his goodness and free grace to him in that particular. Well, then, God must be owned, sought, glorified, in this particular. The husband, in the catalogue and inventory of his mercies, must not forget to bless God for this, and the wife for the husband. The Lord was gracious in providing for me a good companion; I obtained favour from the Lord. God is concerned in this whole affair, he brought the woman to the man; he giveth the portion, which is not so much the dowry given by the parents, which is little worth, unless his blessing be added with it, as all the graces and abilities by which all married persons are made helpful one to another. He giveth the children, P's. exxvii. 3, 'Lo, children are an heritage from the Lord;' their conception and formation in the womb is from God. Parents know not whether it be male or female, beautiful or deformed. They know not the number of the bones, and veins, and arteries. He giveth them life; a sentence of death waylayeth them as soon as they come into the world. He giveth them comfort; there is a great deal of pride, and arrogancy, and self-willedness in all the sons and daughters of Adam, which makes them uncomfortable in their relations. A wife would soon prove a Jezebel, and not an Abigail, and a husband a Nabal, and not a David, by Satan's malice and our own corruption; a help would soon become a snare. They that would perform the duties of this relation need strongly to be supported with the assistance of God's Spirit. 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,' Eph. vi. 10. So that, since God giveth all, surely his providence must be owned and acknowledged; and you ought to say, this is the wife God hath chosen for me, and this is the husband God hath chosen for me.

II. Why is this so necessary a duty? It doth in a great measure appear from what is said already. But farther—

1. It will be a great engagement upon us to give God all the glory of the comfort we have in such a relation, when you do more sensibly and explicitly take one another out of God's hands. We are apt to look to second causes; he that sendeth the present is the giver, not he that bringeth it to us. The Romans were wont once a year to cast garlands into their fountains, by that superstition owning the benefit they had by them. However, it hath a good moral to us in the bosom of it, that we should own the fountain of our blessings, and not ascribe them to our own wisdom and foresight, but the grace and favour of God, who, in the mere lottery and chance of human affairs, was pleased to choose so well for us. Jacob owned his fountain when he was become two bands, Gen. xxxii. 10. So should we; *of him, through him, to him*, do mutually infer one another. What we have from God, must be used for God. God is very jealous that we will not look to the original and first cause of our mercies: Hosea ii. 8, 'She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold; and therefore will I return, and take away my corn, and wine, and oil, and flax,' &c. It is the way to lose our comforts, when we do not own and acknowledge God's hand in them. We are drowned in sense, inured and accustomed to second causes, so that

God's hand is invisible and little regarded, we know it not, or heed it not. Now that we may look up and own the first cause, and give him his due honour, it is good to have explicit and actual thoughts in the receiving of our mercies, so as to take them out of God's hand; to draw aside the veil and covering of the creature, that you may remember the giver.

2. That we may carry ourselves more holily in our relations, it is good to see God's hand in them. Every relation is a new talent wherewith God intrusteth us to trade for his glory; and to that end we must make conscience to use it. In Mat. xxv., the master delivered to every one his goods apart, and they that had the benefit received the charge. We are often pressed to do things, as in and to the Lord, upon religious and gracious reasons. It hath been the credit of religion, *Dent tales mercatores, tales maritos, tales exactores fisci*, &c.—Let history show such husbands, such wives, &c. The Christian religion maketh a man conscientiously careful and tender of his duty to man, not from a natural principle, or from our own ease, peace and credit, but from the conscience of our duty to God. Now it must not lose this credit by you. God puts us into relations to see how we will glorify him in them; there is something more required of you than as single Christians. God that puts a man into the ministry, requireth that he should honour him, not only as a Christian, but as a minister. And God that calleth a man into the magistracy, requireth that he should honour him as a magistrate. So to be a master of a family, and a wife or husband, there is another talent to be accounted for. An ambassador that is sent into a foreign country about special business, must give an account, not only as a traveller, but as an ambassador, of the business he was intrusted with. God will have honour by you as a wife, or as a husband; you have a new opportunity to make religion amiable, that the unbelieving world may see how profitable the heavenly life is to human society.

3. That we may more patiently bear the crosses incident to this state of life if God call us to them. They that launch forth into the world, sail in a troublesome and tempestuous sea, and cannot expect but to meet with a storm before they come to the end of their voyage. The married life hath its comforts, and also its encumbrances and sorrows. Now it will sweeten all our crosses incident to this condition, when we remember we did not rashly enter into it by our own choice, but were led by the fair directure and fair invitation of God's providence; we need not much be troubled at what overtaketh us in the way of our duty, and the relations to which we are called. That hand that sent the trouble will sanctify it, or he will overrule things so that they shall work for our good. If God call us into this estate, he will support us in it. It is a great satisfaction to you that you are acting that part in the world which God would have you act; that you can say, I am there where God hath set me, and therefore will bear the troubles that attend that state and condition of life. If a man run on his own head, and inconveniences arise, they are more uncomfortably borne. It is true, that God doth fetch off his people from the afflictions they have brought upon themselves by their sin and folly, such is the indulgence of his grace; yet those sufferings are the more

uncomfortable that take us out of the way of our duty; and God hath undertaken only to keep us in all our ways, but not out of our duty, Ps. xci. 11. The promises are not to foster men in their running after folly, but to encourage them in their several callings and state of life wherein God hath set them; there we may abide with comfort, and expectation either of God's blessing or his support. We tempt God when we venture upon a state of life which he hath not called us to, and have not his warrant; but when it is not good for us to be alone, and the Lord sends an helpmate for us, he will not forsake us.

4. We may with the more confidence apply ourselves to God, and depend on him for a blessing upon a wife of God's choosing, or a husband of God's choosing. We have access to the throne of grace with more hope, because we have given up ourselves to his direction: Prov. iii. 6, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' God will order things for the best, when we do not lead, but follow him, we still consult with God, and dare not undertake anything but what is agreeable to his will. And will God mislead us and direct us amiss, or turn us into a by-way or crooked path? It is said, Ps. xxxvii. 23, 24, 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he (that is the Lord) delighteth in his way; though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.' It is a blessed thing to be under God's conduct, to be led on or led off by so wise, and powerful, and all-sufficient a guide; for such he delights to do them good, and taketh pleasure in his resolutions to prosper them. Sometimes they shall have a taste of the evils of the world, but they shall not be ruined by them. They may fall, but they shall not be dashed in pieces; it is an allusion to a vessel that gets a knock, but is not broken by the fall.

5. It is an help to make us more ready to part with one another when God willeth it. All temporal things, we receive them from God, upon this condition, to yield them up to God again, when he calls for them. The law concerning all created enjoyments is, 'The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh,' Job i. 21. We make a snare for ourselves, and receive them not in a right notion, if we do not receive them as mortal and perishing comforts, which God may demand at pleasure, and so keep the soul loose, and in a posture of submission, if God should cross us and disappoint us in them. Thus must we use all outward comforts with that weanedness and moderation as to children, estates, and all temporal blessings, &c., that will become a sense of the frailty that is in them, and the wheelings and turnings of an uncertain world. It is the apostle's direction: 1 Cor. vii. 29, 'The time is short, it remains that those that have wives be as though they had none;'—not as to be defective in our love to them and care over them; no, there is rather to be an excess than a defect here: Prov. v. 19, 'Be thou ravished always with her love;'—but as to a preparation of heart to keep or lose, if God should see fit, to be contented to part with a dear yoke-fellow, or at least with an humble submission and acquiescence, when God's will is declared; and somewhat of this must be mingled with all our rejoicings, some thoughts of the vanity of the creature. Leavened bread was to be eaten with

the thank-offerings in the feast of tabernacles, when the barns were full. 'Man at his best estate is vanity,' Ps. xxxix. 5. Now, to help us to do this, it is good to consider he that hath the right to give hath also the right of taking away; and as you must not be overjoyed with the receiving, so not be over-sad with parting.

### APPLICATION.

*Use 1.* Let us seek God by earnest prayer when any such matter is in hand. Marriages, we say, are made in heaven before they are made on earth. Pagans, before the awe of religion was extinguished, would begin with their gods in any weighty enterprise. *A Jove principium* was an honest principle among the heathens. Laban consults with his teraphim; Balak sendeth for Balaam to give him counsel; heathens had their sybils, and oracles at Delphos. So far as any nation was touched with a sense of a divine power, they would never venture upon any weighty thing without asking the leave or the blessing of what they supposed to be God. So for God's children, it was their constant practice; they durst not resolve upon any course till they had asked counsel of God. David always ran to the oracle of the ephod: 'Shall I go up to Hebron?' Jacob in his journey would neither go to Laban nor come from him without a warrant. Jehoshaphat, when the business of Ramoth Gilead was afoot, doth not lead forth the captains of the army but he sends for the prophets of the Lord: 1 Kings xxii. 4, 5, 'Inquire, I pray thee, of the word of the Lord this day.' So Judges i. 1, 'Who shall go up and fight against the Canaanites?' It is a contempt of God, and a kind of laying him aside, when we dare undertake anything without his leave, counsel, and blessing; and these are the things we are to seek in prayer.

1. His leave. God is the absolute Lord of all things, both in heaven and earth, and whatsoever is possessed by any creature is by his indulgence. Whatever store and plenty we have by us, our Saviour teacheth us to beg our allowance, or leave to use so much as is necessary for us, or the portion of every day: 'Give us, *σήμερον*, *this day* our daily bread.' It is a piece of religious manners to acknowledge God's right and sovereignty. It is robbery to make use of a man's goods, and to waste them and consume them, without his leave. All that we have or use is God's, who reserveth the property of all to himself. In distributing to the creatures, he never intended to divest himself of his right; as a husbandman, by sowing his corn in the field, is not dispossessed of a right to it. God hath *dominium*; we have *dispensationem* of life, and all the comforts that belong to it. Life is his; man is a *custos*, a guardian of it for God. Gold and silver is his; man is a steward to improve it for God. Adam had no interest in Eve till God brought her to him, and bestowed her on him. Every one of us must get a grant of God of all that he hath; the Lord he possesseth the house that we dwell in, the clothes we wear, the food we eat; and so, in the use of all other comforts, we must have a license from God, and take his leave. God is said to have given David the wives that he had into his bosom.



2. His counsel and direction when the case is doubtful and our thoughts are uncertain: Prov. iii. 5, 'Lean not to thy own understanding.' We scarce know duties, certainly we cannot foresee events; therefore a man that maketh his bosom his oracle, his wit his counsellor, will choose a mischief to himself, instead of a comfort and a blessing. Therefore we ought chiefly, and first of all, to consult with God, and seek his direction, for he seeth the heart, and foreseeeth events. We can only look upon what is present, and there upon the outward appearance. Therefore God can best direct us in our choice, he knoweth the fittest matches and consorts for every one; who hath a prospect of all things in one moment of time, and by one act of the understanding, and so can best dispose of human affairs for the profit and comfort of the creature: Jer. x. 23, 'O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: nor is it in the sons of men to direct their steps;' that is, to order their affairs so as they may have felicity and comfort in them. So Prov. xx. 24, 'Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?' We cannot foresee the event of things, what is expedient, what not. Man would fain work out his happiness like a spider, climb up by a thread of his own spinning. But alas! all our devices and fine contrivances are gone with the turn of a besom. He that will be his own carver, seldom carveth out a good portion to himself. They intrench upon God's prerogative, and take the work out of his hands; and therefore no wonder if their wisdom be turned into folly.

3. We ask his blessing. God doth not only foresee the event, but order it; by his wisdom he foreseeeth it, and by his powerful providence he bringeth it to pass. Therefore God, that hath the disposal of all events, when our direction is over, is to be sought unto for a blessing; for every comfort cometh the sooner when it is sought in prayer; and whatever God's purposes be, that is our duty: Jer. xxix. 11, 12, 'I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you;' Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 'I will for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' So in this case we read, John ii. 2, when there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, 'both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage.' Married persons do need, and therefore should seek, Christ's presence and countenance. Be sure to invite him, and take him along with you, that he may strengthen you by his grace, and dispose all providences about you for your comfort. He puts the greatest honour upon the marriage when he doth enable you to carry yourselves graciously in that relation, and to God's glory; and he hath the power of all providences put into his hand, as well as all grace.

*Use 2.* Is advice to persons that are entering into this relation.

1. Negatively. See that God be no loser by the marriage.

2. Positively. Be sure that God be a gainer.

These are the two proffers I have to make to you.

1. Negatively. Let not God be a loser; he never intended to give you gifts to his own wrong.

Now that will be :—

[1.] If he be not the only one, and the lovely one of your souls. God must not have an image of jealousy set up; he must still be owned as the chiefest good. A wife is the delight of the eyes, but not the idol of the heart. Still you must be sure that his place be not invaded, that you may say, Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom do I desire on earth in comparison of thee?' Carnal complacency must not weaken your delight in God; it is apt to do so. The excuse of one of those that was invited to the marriage-feast was, 'I have married a wife, and I cannot come,' Mat. xxii. Surely Christ would teach us thereby that this relation may become a snare, and encroach upon the prerogatives of God; he may be jostled out of the heart by the intrusion of some earthly comfort.

[2.] If you be diverted from the earnest pursuit of heavenly things, either by carnal complacency or distracting cares and worldly encumbrances. There will be a time when we shall 'neither marry nor be given in marriage,' Luke xx. 35. And that is our happiest time; present contentments must not weaken the lively expectation of it, and steal away the heart into a mindlessness of it. Would God bring you to one another, think you, to turn off your thoughts and hopes for this blessed time when he shall be all in all? No; your comforts by the way in your pilgrimage must not hinder your delight in your comforts at home and in your country; this would be like a great heir in travel that should guzzle in an alchouse, and never think of returning to his inheritance.

[3.] God would be a loser if you be less resolute in owning God's truth than you were before. Oh, take heed of daubing in religion! We must hate all for Christ, Luke xiv. 26. We must be as true still to make good our engagement to him. Wife and children must be undervalued for the gospel; we may be put to the trial whether we will cleave to them or Christ, who is our choice husband. The bond of religion is above all bonds; all bonds between husband and wife, father and children, end in death, but the bond of Christ is eternal: your children will not lose by your faithfulness to God.

2. Positively. Let God be a gainer.

[1.] By your daily praises, and blessing God for his providence, that hath brought you into this relation: 'I obtained favour from the Lord.'

[2.] By living to God in this relation, performing the duties thereof so as your converse may be some lively resemblance of the communion between Christ and his church: Eph. v. 25-30, 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, 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. 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. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.'

[3.] By being mutual helps to one another in the best things, by

the advancement of piety and godliness. The love of Christ doth not only enforce the husband's duty as an argument, but points forth the right manner of it as a pattern. Christ's love is sanctifying love: so should theirs be, such a love as showeth itself by sincere and real endeavours to bring about one another's spiritual and eternal good. Love one another, 'as heirs together of the grace of life,' 1 Peter iii. 7.