

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF MARRIAGE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you.”—
Jeremiah iii. 14.

THESE be dainty words—a grateful anodyne for a troubled conscience. Such singular comfort is fitted to cheer up the soul, and put the brightest hue on all her prospects. The person to whom it is addressed hath an eminently happy position. Satan will be very busy with you, believer in Christ, to-night. He will say, “What right have you to believe that God is married to you?” He will remind you of your imperfections, and of the coldness of your love, and perhaps of the backsliding state of your heart. He will say, “What, with all this about you, can you be presumptuous enough to claim union with the Son of God? Can you venture to hope that there will be any marriage between you and the holy One.” He will tell you as though he were an advocate for holiness, that it is not possible that such a one as you feel yourself to be, can really be a partaker of so choice and special a privilege as being married unto the Lord. Let this suffice for an answer to all such suggestions: the text is found addressed, not to Christians in a flourishing state of heart, not to believers upon Mount Tabor, transfigured with Christ, not to a spouse all chaste and fair, and sitting under the banner of love, feasting with her lord; but it is addressed to those who are called “backsliding children.” God speaks to his church in her lowest and most abject estate, and though he does not fail to rebuke her sin, to lament it, and to make her lament it too, yet still in such an estate he says to her, “I am married unto you.” Oh! it is grace that he should be married to any of us, but it is grace at its highest pitch, it is the ocean of grace at its flood-tide, that he should speak thus of “backsliding children.” That he should speak in notes of love of any of the fallen race of Adam is “passing strange—’tis wonderful;” but that he should select those who have behaved treacherously to him, who have turned their backs to him and not their faces, who have played him false, although, nevertheless, his own, and say unto them, “I am married unto you;” this is lovingkindness beyond aught we could wot or ween. Hear, O heaven, and admire, O earth, let every understanding heart break forth into singing, yea, let every humble

mind bless and praise the condescension of the Most High! Cheer up poor drooping hearts. Here is sweet encouragement for some of you who are depressed, and disconsolate, and sit alone, to draw living waters out of this well. Do not let the noise of the archers keep you back from the place of the drawing of water. Be not afraid lest you should be cursed whilst you are anticipating the blessing. If you do but trust in Jesus, if you have but a vital interest in the once humbled, now exalted Lord, come with holy boldness to the text, and whatever comfort there be here, receive it and rejoice therein.

To this end let us attentively *consider the relationship which is here spoken of, and diligently enquire how far we are experimentally acquainted with it.*

I. IN CONSIDERING THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH IS HERE SPOKEN OF, you will observe that the affinity of *marriage, though exceedingly near of kin, is not one of birth.*

Marriage is not a relationship of original consanguinity. It is contracted between two persons who may, during the early part of their lives, have been entire strangers to one another; they may scarcely have looked each other in the face, excepting during the few months that precede their nuptials. The families may have had no previous acquaintance, they may have lived afar off as the very antipodes. One may have been opulent, and in possession of vast domains, and the other may have been indigent, and reduced to straitened circumstances. Genealogies do not regulate it: disparities do not hinder it. The connection is not of natural birth but of voluntary contract or covenant. Such is the relationship which exists between the believer and his God. Whatever relation there was originally between God and man, it was stamped out and extinguished by the fall. We were aliens, strangers, and foreigners, far off from God by wicked works. We had henceforth no relation to the Most High; we were banished from his presence as traitors to his throne, as condemned criminals who had revolted against his power. Between our souls and God there could be no communion. He is light and we are dark. He is holiness and we are sin. He is heaven, and we are far more akin to hell. In him there is consummate greatness, and we are puny insignificance. He filleth all worlds with his strength, and as for us, we are the creatures of a day, who know nothing, and who are crushed before the moth. The gulf between God and a sinner is something terrible to contemplate. There is a vast difference between God and the creature even when the creature is pure, but between God and the fallen creature—oh! where is the line that shall measure the infinite leagues of distance? Where was there a means of ever bridging so terrible a chasm except the Lord Jesus had found it in his own person, and in his own passion? How could we have ever perceived the infinite design, unless it had been revealed to us as an accomplished fact, by which he has reconciled us and brought us into communion with himself, that we should be married unto him? Now, Christian, just contemplate what you were, and the degraded family to which you belonged, that you may magnify the riches of his grace who espoused you in your low estate, and hath so bound himself with all the pledges of a husband that he saith, "I am married unto you." What were you? That is a black catalogue of foul

transgressors which the apostle gives in the first epistle to the Corinthians (vi. 9, 11), I forbear a recital of the filthy vices—at the end of which he says, “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified.” In those crimes he enumerates, many of us had a share, nay, all of us! What was our father, and what our father’s house? What was our aim? What was our practice? What were our desires? What were our tendencies? They were earthly, downward, hellward. We were at a distance from God, and we loved that distance well. But the Lord Jesus took upon himself our nature: upon him the Lord did lay the iniquity of all his people. And why? Not merely to save us from the wrath to come, but that we, being lifted up out of our degradation by virtue of his atonement, and being sanctified and made meet by the power of the Spirit, should have a relationship established between us and God which was not formed by nature, but which has been achieved and consummated by astounding grace. Unto the Lord let us give thanks this night, as we recollect the hole of the pit whence we were digged, and call to mind the fact that now we are united to him in ties of blood and bonds of love.

Marriage-union is the result of choice. Any exceptions to this rule that might be pleaded, are void in reason, because they arise from folly and transgression: there ought to be no exception. It is scarcely a true marriage at all where there has not been a choice on each side. But certainly if the Lord our God is married unto us, and we are married unto God, the choice is mutual. The first choice is with God. That choice was made, we believe, before the foundation of the world:—

“Long ere the sun’s refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove,
They on his sacred bosom lay,
Lov’d with an everlasting love.”

God never began to love his people. It were impossible for the spiritual mind to entertain so unworthy a thought. He saw them in the glass of his decrees; he foresaw them, with his eye of prescience, in the mass of creatureship, all fallen and ruined; but yet he beheld them, and pitied and loved them, elected them and set them apart. “They shall be mine,” saith the Lord. Here we are all agreed; and we ought to be all agreed upon the second point, namely, that we also have chosen our God. Brethren, no man is saved against his will. If any man should say that he were saved against his will, it would be a proof that he was not saved at all; for reluctancy or indifference betrays an entire alienation of all the affections of the heart. If the will is still set against God, then the whole man is proven to be at enmity with him. By nature we did not choose God: by nature we kicked against his law, and turned aside from his dominion. But is it not written, “My people shall be willing in the day of my power”? Do you not understand how, without any violation of your free agency, God has used proper arguments and motives so as to influence your understanding? Through our understanding our will is convinced, and our souls are spontaneously drawn. Then we throw down the weapons of our rebellion, and humble ourselves at the footstool of the Most High; and now we do freely choose that which we once

wickedly abhorred. Do not you, Christian, at this very hour, choose Christ with all your heart to be your Lord and Saviour? If it could be put to you over again to make an election whether you should love the world or love Christ, would you not say, "Oh! my Beloved is better to me than ten thousand worlds! He fixes all my love, engrosses all my passion: I give myself up to him most freely; he bought me with a great price; he won me with his great love; he enraptured me with his unspeakable charms, so I give myself up to him"? Here is a mutual choice. I wish that some of our friends would forbear to make such a stand against the doctrine of God's choosing us. If they will but read Scripture with an unprejudiced mind, I am quite sure they will find it there. It always seems inexplicable to me that those who claim free will so very boldly for man, should not also allow some free will to God. I suppose, my brethren would not like to have to be married to somebody whom they had not chosen, and why should Jesus Christ not have the right to choose his own bride? Why should he not set his love where he will, and have the right to exercise, according to his own sovereign mind, that bestowment of his heart and hand which none could by any means deserve? This know, that he will have his own choice whether we impugn the doctrine or not; for he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. At the same time, I wish that those friends who believe this truth, would receive the other, which is quite as true. We do choose Christ in return, and that without any violation of our free agency. Some people cannot see two truths at one time; they cannot understand that God has made all truth to be double. Truth is many-sided. While divine predestination is true, human responsibility is also true; while it is true that Christ chooses us, it is also true that the unrenewed mind will not choose him: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." This is the sin and the condemnation of man, that "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Settle it, however, in your minds, that when God says, "I am married unto you," it implies that there is a blessed choice on both sides; and so it is a true marriage.

3. Our third reflection is, that *marriage is cemented by mutual love*. Where there is not this mutual affection, it deserves not the name of marriage. The dark shadow of a blessing they cannot realise must be a heavy load for either heart to bear; but where there is true and genuine love, it is the sweetest and happiest mode of living. It is one of the blessings of paradise which has been preserved to us after the fall. Without love, wedded life must be a very purgatory above ground. In the solemn contract which has brought our souls this night to God, the marriage is sustained, cemented, strengthened, and made delightful by mutual love. Need I talk to you of the love of God? It is a theme we are scarcely competent to talk of. You need to sit down and weep about it for very joy, joy which fills the heart, and makes the eyes overflow, but well nigh chains the tongue, for it is a deep, profound, and inexpressible. "He loved me, and gave himself for me." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." "As the Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you." Oh, the love of God—it would surpass the powers of an angel to set it forth. Sure, sure, it

shall be the blest employment of eternity's long ages for us to comprehend it; and, perhaps, when myriads of ages have rolled over our happy souls, we shall still be as much struck with wonder with it as we were at first. The marvel doth not diminish on inspection: familiarity cannot make it common. The nearer we approach, the deeper our awe. It will be as great a surprise that God should love such cold, such faithless, such unworthy beings as ourselves, at the end of ten thousand years as it was at first, perhaps more so. The more thoroughly we shall know ourselves, the more fully we shall understand the good of the Lord; thus will our wonder grow and swell. Even in heaven, we shall be lost in surprise and admiration at the love of God to us. The rapture will augment the reverence we feel. Well, but, brethren beloved, I trust we also love him in return! Do you never feel one soft affection rising after another as you muse on the Christ of God? When you sometimes listen to a sermon in which the Saviour's dear affection to you is set forth, do you not feel that the unbidden tear wets your cheek? Does not your heart swell sometimes, as if it were unable to hold your emotions? Is there not a "joy unspeakable and full of glory" that comes over you? Can you not say—

"Jesus, I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to mine ear;
Fain would I sound it out so loud
That earth and heaven should hear"?

I hope you do not need to sing to-night—

" 'Tis a point I long to know."

but, I trust, that in the solemn silence of your souls you can say, "Thou knowest that I love thee;" grieved that the question should be asked, but still ready to answer, with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Now, it is impossible for you to love God without the strong conclusive evidence that God loves you. I once knew a good woman who was the subject of many doubts, and when I got to the bottom of her doubt, it was this: she knew she loved Christ, but she was afraid he did not love her. "Oh!" I said, "that is a doubt that will never trouble me; never, by any possibility, because I am sure of this, that the heart is so corrupt, naturally, that love to God never did get there without God's putting it there." You may rest quite certain, that if you love God, it is a fruit, and not a root. It is the fruit of God's love to you, and did not get there by the force of any goodness in you. You may conclude, with absolute certainty, that God loves you if you love God. There never was any difficulty on his part. It always was on your part, and now that the difficulty is gone from you, none whatever remains. O let our hearts rejoice and be filled with great delight, because the Saviour has loved us and given himself for us. So let us realise the truth of the text, "I am married unto you."

4. My fourth observation is, that *this marriage necessitates certain mutual relations*. I cannot say "duties," for the word seems out of place on either side. How can I speak of the great God making pledges of faithfulness? and yet with reverence, let me word it so, for in

my vocabulary I have hardly words to set it forth. When God becomes a husband, he undertakes to do a husband's part. When he says, "Thy Maker is thy husband," you may rest assured that he does not take the relationship without assuming (well, I must say it) all the responsibilities which belong to that condition. It is the part of God to nourish, to cherish, to shield, to protect, to bless those with whom he condescends, in infinite mercy, to enter into union. When the Lord Jesus Christ became the husband of his church, he felt that he was under an engagement to us, and inasmuch as there were debts incurred, he paid them.

"Yes, said the Son, with her I'll go,
Through all the depths of sin and woe;
And on the cross will even dare
The bitter pains of death to bear."

He never shrunk from the doing of any of those loving works which belong to the husband of his chosen spouse. He exalted the word "husband," and made it to be more full of meaning than it had ever been before, so that the apostle could see it glittering in a new light, and could say, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Oh, yes! dear friends, there is a responsibility arising out of this relationship, but he of whom we speak has not departed from it; you know he has not. And now, what upon our side? The wife has to reverence her husband, and to be subject unto him in all things. That is precisely our position towards him who has married us. Let his will be our will. Let his wish be our law. Let us not need to be flogged to service, but let us say—

"'Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."

O Christian, if the Master condescends to say, "I am married unto you," you will not any longer ask, "What is my duty?" but you will say, "What can I do for him?" The loving wife does not say, "What is my duty?" and stand coldly questioning how far she should go, and how little she may do, but all that she can do for him who is her husband she will do, and everything that she can think of, every thing she can devote herself to, in striving to please him in all things, she will most certainly do and perform. And you and I will do the same if we have realised our union with Christ. O beloved, do not grow sentimental and waste your energies in drivelling fancies as some have done. Speak ye of a wife?—where the family is large, the work is heavy, and the responsibility great. I could fain remind you here, did time permit, of the words of King Lemuel, and the prophecy that his mother taught him. Bear with me at least while I admonish you to such a one, that the heart of thy husband may safely trust in thee. Let it be thy care to give meat to thy household. Lay thy hands to the spindle; suffer not thine industry to fail; eat not the bread of idleness. Stretch out thine hand to the poor, and reach forth both thine hands to the needy. Open thy mouth with wisdom, and in thy tongue be the law of kindness. Yea, and consider this with thyself, that in thy regard for all the duties of thy station, thou art fulfilling thy

bounden obligations to thy Lord. Short words, but mighty, matchless deeds have told how Jesus loved us. Be it ours to carve our song of love to him on the hearts of some tender nurslings who are cast in our way, and committed to our care. O that the life I now live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God, might become a poem, and a grateful response to him that loved me, and gave himself for me. I hope we do know, then, that when God says, "I am married unto you," it necessitates mutual relations.

5. Fifthly, *it also involves mutual confidences*. How shall we call that a marriage where the husband and wife are still two persons, maintaining individuality as if it were a scrupulous condition of the contract? That is utterly foreign to the divine idea. In a true marriage, the husband and wife become one. Henceforth their joys and their cares, their hopes and their labours, their sorrows and their pleasures, rise and blend together in one stream. Brethren, the Lord our God has said it, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant." "Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" There was the secret, because there is a union between Christ and his people which there is not between Christ and the world. How joyously do the words sound—they have a silvery ring in them—"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Christ keeps nothing back from you. Remember another word of his: "If it were not so, I would have told you." Oh, how delightful! He says, "I go to prepare a place for you." He tells them that he is going to prepare a place for them, and then he says, "If it were not so, I would have told you—I keep no secrets back from you; you are near me, my flesh and my bones. I left my Father's house in glory, that I might become one with you, and manifest myself to you, and I keep back nothing from you, but reveal my very heart and my very soul to you." Now, Christian, just see: you stand in the relation of a spouse, and you must tell your very heart out to Christ. No, do not go and tell it to your neighbours, nor your friends, for, somehow or other, the most sympathising heart cannot enter into all our griefs. There is a grief which the stranger cannot intermeddle with; but there never was a pang into which Christ could not enter. Make a confidant of the Lord Jesus—tell him all. You are married unto him: play the part of a wife who keeps no secrets back, no trials back, no joys back; tell them all to him. I was in a house yesterday where there was a little child, and it was said to me, "He is such a funny child." I asked in what way, and the mother said, "Well, if he tumbles down and hurts himself in the kitchen, he will always go up stairs crying and tell somebody, and then he comes down and says, "I told somebody;" and if he is upstairs he goes down and tells somebody, and when he comes back it is always, "I told somebody," and he does not cry any more. Ah! well, I thought, we must tell somebody; it is human nature to want to have sympathy, but if we would always go to Jesus, and tell him all, and there leave it, we might often dismiss the burden, and be refreshed with a grateful song. Let us do so, and go with all our joys

and all our troubles unto him, who says, "I am married unto you." I know the devil will say, "Why, you must not tell the Lord your present trouble: it is too little, and besides, you know you did wrong, and brought it upon yourself." Well, but you would tell your husband, would you not? and will you not tell your Lord? You could not tell a master, but you can tell a husband. Oh! do not go back into the old legal state of calling Christ Baali, but call him Ishi, "My man, my husband," and put that confidence in him which it is expected that the wife should place in a husband who dearly loves her.

6. We must go on to a sixth point. *This marriage implies fellowship in all its relations.* Whatsoever a husband possesses becomes his wife's. She cannot be poor if he be rich; and what little she has, whatever it may be, comes to him. If she be in debt, her debts become his. When Jesus Christ took his people, he gave them all he had. There is nothing which Christ has which he has not given to us. It is noteworthy that he has given his church his own name! "Where?" say you. Well, there are two passages in Jeremiah that most remarkably illustrate this (chap. xxiii. 6, and chap. xxiii. 16). In the one it says, "This is the name whereby he shall be called," and in the other, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called." In both, the name is identical. "Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness." What "She shall be called"? Yes, as though he said, "She shall take my name, and with the name, of course, the entire open acknowledgment of his interest in her and her interest in him. As such she is partaker of all his glory: if he be a king, she is a queen; if he be in heaven, "He hath raised us up together, and made us to sit in heavenly places with him;" if he be heavenly, she also shall bear the image of the heavenly; if he be immortal, so shall she be; and if he be at the right hand of the Father, so shall she be also highly exalted with him. Now, it is saying but very little when I add, that, therefore, whatever we have, belongs to him—oh! it is so little, so very little, but one wishes it were more. "O that Christ were not so glorious as he is"—I have sometimes thought. It was half a wicked wish, but I meant it well, that I might help to glorify him. O that he were still poor, that one might ask him to a feast! O that he were still in this world, that one could break the alabaster box of ointment and pour it on his head! But thou art so great, most blessed Master, that we can do nothing to increase thee! Thou art so high, we cannot exalt thee! Thou art so happy, that we cannot bless thee! Yet, what am I saying? It is all a mistake! He is here still. He calls every one of his people "Members of his body;" and if you wish to enrich him, help the poor; if you want to feed him, feed the hungry. They that bind garments about the naked, put vestures upon the Lord himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done

it unto me." I hope we can sing without falsehood that verse of Dr. Watts's:—

" And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I could give him all."

7. A seventh observation, and then I shall refrain from dwelling longer on this point. *The very crown of marriage is mutual delight and complacency.* The wife of a Persian nobleman, having gone to a feast which was given by the great Darius, was asked by her husband whether she did not think that Darius was the finest man in the world. No, she said, she did not think so; she never saw any one in the world who was comparable to her husband. And doubtless that is just the opinion which a husband forms of his wife and a wife of her husband where the marriage is such as it should be. Now, certainly Christ sets a very high store upon us. I recollect turning over that passage in Solomon's Songs, looking at it and wondering how it could be true—believing it, and yet not being able to comprehend it—where Christ says, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee!" Oh, what eyes he must have! We say that love is blind; but that cannot be true in Christ's case, for he seeth all things. Why, this is how it is: he sees himself in us. He does not see us as we are, but in his infinite grace he sees us as we are to be, as Kent sings:—

" Not as she stood in Adam's fall,
When sin and ruin covered all;
But as she'll stand another day,
Brighter than sun's meridian ray."

The sculptor says he can see a bust in a block of marble, and that all he has to do is to chip away the extra marble, and let the bust appear. So Christ can see a perfect being in every one of us, if we are his people; and what he is about with us day by day is taking off the excrescences, making us to be like himself. He can see us as we shall one day be before the throne of God in heaven, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Ah! beloved, he sets great store by us. His delights are with the sons of men. He loves to hear our praise, and to listen to our prayer. The songs of his people are his sweet perfume, and communion with his people is like the beds of spices, the beds of lilies, where he feedeth. And as for us, who are his people, I am sure we can say that there is no delight which can equal communion with Christ. We have tried other delights—shame upon us!—we have tried some of them, but after having done so, we find that there is nothing like our Lord. "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity, saith the preacher;" but when we come to Christ, we find no vanity there, but can say:—

" Where can such sweetness be
As I have tasted in thy love,
As I have found in thee?"

The Christian's heart is like Noah's dove: it flies over the wide waste, and cannot rest the sole of its foot until it comes back to Christ. He is the true Noah, who puts out his hand and takes in the weary, fluttering dove, and gives it rest. There is no peace the whole world over but with Christ.

" There's no such thing as pleasure here,
My Jesus is my all;
As thou dost shine or disappear,
My pleasures rise or fall."

Thus much, then, by way, as it were, of skimming the surface of this delightful word, "I am married unto you."

II. Two or three sentences only upon the second point. **HOW FAR DO YOU AND I EXPERIMENTALLY UNDERSTAND THIS?**

I am afraid some of you think me half crazy to-night. You are saying, "Well, I do not comprehend this; whatever is the man talking about? God married to us! Christ married to us! I do not comprehend it!" God have mercy upon thee, my poor hearer, and bring thee to know it! But let me tell thee, if thou didst but know it, there is a secret here that would make thee a thousand times more happy than all the joys of the world can ever make thee. Thou remindest me of the cock in the fable, who found a diamond on the dunghill, and as he turned it over, he said, "I would rather have found a grain of barley." That was according to his nature. And so with you. This precious pearl of union to God will seem to be nothing to you: a little worldly pleasure will be more to your taste. One could weep to think there should be such ignorance of true joy and true delight! Oh! blind eyes, that cannot see beauty in the Saviour! Oh! stone-cold hearts, that can see no loveliness in him! Jesus! they are besotted, they are mad, who cannot love thee! It is a strange infatuation of the sons of men to think that they can do without thee, that they can see any light apart from thee, thou Sun of Righteousness, or anything like beauty in all the gardens of the world apart from thee, thou Rose of Sharon, thou Lily of the Valley! O that they knew thee!

" A thousand sorrows pierce my soul,
To think that all are not thine own."

Do I address any to-night, who, while they pretend to be religious people, hold loosely by their allegiance to the Lord? There are many such, and we occasionally meet with them here. They cannot appease their conscience without some show of profession, so they join with us as hearers and spectators in the solemn assembly; but they never unite with the church, because they have not devoutly yielded up their hearts to Christ. Ask them the reason, and their answer sounds modest, and yet the reserve it implies is anything but chaste. Do you tell us that you are afraid you should not walk consistently? Would it

not be more true to admit that your relationship with the world, your service of mammon, your ordinary pastimes, and your occasional revels, harmless as you try to persuade yourselves they are now, if viewed in the light of espousals to Christ, most be accounted a very shame? So far as the principles of Christianity are concerned, you endorse them with your private creed, and you are "Protestant" enough to prefer the most evangelical doctrines; but the reserve in your conduct is a clear index to a most fatal reserve in your character. You might admit God to be the supreme, but not the exclusive Lord of your heart. You would give the Lord's altar more honour than any other altar, but still you would not remove the high places which desecrate the land. Your opinion is that there is no god in all the earth but the God of Israel, yet your practice is to bow down in the house of Rimmon. You wish to have all the promises of God vouchsafed to you, but you decidedly object to make any vows in his sanctuary. It is to such as you that these delicate appeals are most distasteful, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you." Nothing in your experience responds to this. You stand aloof as if you were aggrieved. I must warn you, therefore, that God can be your God only in these bonds of covenant union. But, Christian, I speak to you. Surely you know something about this, that God is married to you? If you do, can you not say with me, "Yes, and he has been a very faithful husband to me"? Now, there is no one of you who can demur to that! Thus far he has been very faithful to you, and what have you been to him? How kind and tender has he been; how faithful, how generous, how sympathising! In your every affliction he has been afflicted, and the angel of his presence has saved you. Just in your extremity he has come to your help. He has carried you through every difficulty, even until now. Oh! you can speak well of him, can you not? And as for his love, Christian, as for his love, what do you think of that? Is it not heaven on earth to you? Do you not reckon it to be—

"Heaven above
To see his face, to taste his love"?

Well, then, speak well of him, speak well of him! Make this world hear his praise! Ring that silver bell in the deaf ears of this generation! Make them know that your Beloved is the fairest of the fair, and compel them to enquire, "O thou fairest among women, what is thy Beloved more than another beloved?"

As for you who do not know him, I should like to ask you this question, and do you answer it for yourselves. Do you want to be married to Christ? Do you wish to have him? Oh! then, there will be no difficulties in the way of the match. If thy heart goes after Christ, he will have thee. If, when thou gettest home to thy bedside, thou

sayest to him, "Dear Saviour, here is my heart, take it, wash it, save me," he will hear thee. Whoever thou mayst be, he will not refuse thee. Oh! he seeks thee, he seeks thee! And when thou seekest him, that is a sure sign that he has found thee. Though thou mayst not have found him, yet he has found thee already. The wedding-ring is ready. Faith is the golden ring which is the token of the marriage-bond. Trust the Saviour! Trust him! Have done with trusting to thy good works. Have done with depending upon thy merits. Take his works, his merits, and rest alone upon him, for now doth he say unto thee, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord." So may he do unto every one of you, and may Christ's name be glorified for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Jeremiah iii.*
