

Series: Marriage
Title: Maintain First Love
Text: 1 Cor 7: 3-5
Date: August 3, 2017
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Last week, I said it would be the last sermon in the series on marriage. But there is at least one more important subject I want to cover in this series.

Now, as I have said repeatedly in this series, I do not pretend to be an authority on marriage. But God is! I leave my word out of it; this is what God says. I am preaching to me as much as to you.

Our subject: Maintain Your First Love.

1 Corinthians 7: 3: Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 4: The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. 5: Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Proposition: Husbands and wives are to maintain our first love to one another like as we are to maintain our first love to Christ—because it is their due.

Divisions: 1) We will see what is included in due benevolence 2) then we will see several reasons why benevolence is to be rendered

DUE BENEVOLENCE

In our text, “due benevolence” specifically means “*intimacy between husband and wife in the marriage bed.*” It is called in Exodus, “*the duty of marriage.*” But it includes much more. In we read *Revelation 2: 1: Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;* Christ is the Husband and his church—you and I espoused to Christ in faith—are his bride. So Christ gave this to the pastor of the church at Ephesus to deliver to the church.

Notice, the bride appeared to be giving Christ her Husband what was due unto him—*Rev 2: 2: I know thy works, and thy labour [the bride was serving Christ her Husband], and thy patience [she patiently continued stedfastly in good works for her Husband] and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: [she stood with Christ against all liars] 3: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. [the bride endured suffering for Christ’s name]*

Yet, something was missing—*Rev 2: 4: Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* It is not that they did not love the Lord at all. The problem was they had left their first love—the love they had for Christ at the first—love that engulfed the whole heart at first. Outwardly it appeared they had that first love. But God looks on the heart. Christ said the heart-love they had at first had grown cold.

Remember, that first love when Christ’s love for us filled our hearts with love for him! We beheld the love of God that chose us freely by his grace and entrusted us to Christ. We beheld God’s love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We beheld God’s love for us in sending the gospel in truth and

giving us life to believe on him. And Christ's love for us made us love and submit to him with our whole heart

2 Corinthians 5:14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Christ keeps this love stirred in our hearts, saying effectually through his gospel,

Joel 2: 12:...turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: 13: And rend your heart, [render unto me that which is my due—your whole heart] and not your garments, [not just going through the motions] and turn unto the LORD your God:

So “due benevolence” between husband and wife includes loving one another with the whole heart and showing that love like we did at first! It includes rendering our: *attention, affection, respect, admiration, appreciation, encouragement, sympathy, understanding, tenderness, kindness.*

I can remember early in our marriage wondering how married couples could part after being married 25-30 years. Newlyweds do not understand why this exhortation even needs to be given to a husband and wife because newlyweds are experiencing *first love* for one another. But what happens after 5, 10, 20 years: when you have children to care for, bills to pay and the pressures of life consume every hour of every day? If our first love for Christ can grow lukewarm then certainly our love for our spouse can.

Maintaining first love for Christ requires effort and so does maintaining first love between husband and wife. Therefore, God says, *1 Corinthians 7: 3: Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.*

BENEVOLENCE THAT IS DUE

Notice in our text that it is called “due” benevolence—*1 Corinthians 7: 3: Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.* It is good will that is due! Why is our loving benevolence due to our spouse?

One reason is because we need *to be* loved. God made us that way! After God created Adam, *Genesis 2: 18: the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.* God said this! So we know it is true! God said, “*it is not good that man should be alone.*” Man has need *to be* loved; and so does a woman. So God made Adam a wife to *help meet that need.* Thus God ordained the institution of marriage between husband and wife.

God made a wife to meet her husband's need of knowing that his wife *reverences and respects him and admires him in all he does.* God made a husband because a wife needs to know that her husband *adores her and admires her and appreciates her in all she does.* Christ our Husband performed the most unselfish act this world has ever known to create a bride who is unselfish. So true love in a believing husband and wife considers it the other's due for them to make them know how much they love them. Selfishness in a husband or wife makes everyone involved miserable. If I think I am due and not being treated as I ought, I will be miserable and so will my wife. True charity “*seeketh not her own.*” (1 Cor 13: 5) Those with the happiest marriage are those who are always trying to do more for the other spouse and who never feel like they have done enough.

Another reason benevolence is due to our spouse is because we are one flesh—*1 Corinthians 7: 4: The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own*

body, but the wife. After the LORD made woman out of Adam's wounded side and presented her to Adam, Adam said, *Genesis 2: 23: And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24: Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

The Holy Spirit says this oneness speaks of Christ and the church. *Ephesians 5: 30: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31: For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself;*

Christ so loved his bride that he did not regard his body as his own but laid down his own body for her, making his bride righteous and holy. When Christ makes himself one with us in the experience of his grace, he says,

1 Corinthians 6: 15: Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?...17: he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit...19: What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20: For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

So a believer desires to glorify our union with Christ by our union with our spouse, knowing—*1 Corinthians 7: 4: The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.* This is how Christ makes a happy marriage. A wife will happily submit to her husband when she knows he loves her, as Christ loves the church. A husband happily honors the wife who submits to him and reverences and respects him as the church does Christ. They go the extra mile to render the good will and kindness and love because they knew it is due because their body is not their own but one another's.

Another reason, love is due our spouse is because husband and wife entered the marriage covenant vowing to love one another always—*1 Corinthians 7: 5: Defraud [rob] ye not one another.* It is called robbing one another because we vowed to love one another.

Before the foundation of the world, when God chose his people and Christ entered covenant, vowing to love his bride. And Christ fulfilled his marriage covenant on the cross. When he espouses us to himself through faith, he fulfills his covenant, *Hosea 3:3...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.* Christ has not defrauded us even once. He renders to us that which he promised would be our due—*so I will I also be for thee.*

So knowing the love of Christ for them, a believing husband and wife consider it robbery, to “defraud” one another of the love and affection we promised to render each other. According to his marriage vow, the husband consider it his wife's due for him to exalt her as the love of his life, to treat her the very best he can with love and affection, to always speak well of her in private, before their children and in public, and to never speak of her shortcomings to anyone. Christ's love for us does not change and we know, likewise, our first love for our spouse should not change.

Another reason, we owe benevolence to our spouse is for the safety of our marriage union—*1 Cor 7: 5...that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.* God warns us that if we become complacent—in giving Christ first love which is his due or in giving our spouse first love which is their due—Satan will tempt us wherever we are weakest in self-control.

If the wife is suspicious, satan will tempt at that point, making her jealous. If the husband has a problem with anger, satan will tempt at that point of weakness. Satan's objective is *to hinder your prayers*, to interrupt

brotherly love and ultimately to separate us from Christ our Husband. And it all begins with something as simple as husband and wife not rendering due benevolence to one another.

Brethren, believers are in a constant warfare that is very, very real. And we are sinners apt to lose self-control. If Satan cannot tempt us with a false gospel, he will do so at home with our marriage. *God says render due benevolence one to another that Satan tempt you not because of your lack of self-control.*

HOW DO WE MAINTAIN FIRST LOVE?

We do not need a mere man to tell us how to maintain first love. Christ tells us how to do so—*Rev 2: 5: Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen,...* Remember, that first love when Christ ravished your hearts! Likewise, husband and wife should always remember their first love one for another.

Rob, keep notes and never forget your first love, never forget the little things that make her smile and make her know you love her. And pull out that list in twenty years and do this second thing Christ says,

Secondly, Christ says—*Rev 2: 5: ...and repent, and do the first works;* Christ tells us not only to remember our first love for him but to do something about it. The first works may be the same as you are doing now. The difference is that you repent and start once again worshipping and serving the Lord with your whole heart which is his due! Likewise, husband and wife are not only to remember our first love, we are to do something to rekindle it: A songwriter I knew put it this way. This is just good ole hillbilly poetry:

The flame is still burning in both of our hearts
But lately it's been turned down low
I know a place, not very far
Where we can rekindle the glow
At a table for two just me and you
We will let the memories unwind
Let's slip back in time
Sip some honeymoon wine!

If it is good for Christ and his bride then then it is good for husband and wife to sip some honeymoon wine!
Put the world on pause, get alone with each other, rekindle that first love and thus maintain first love!

Amen!