

Series: Marriage  
Title: The Marriage Vow  
Text: Hosea 2: 19-20  
Date: July 6, 2017  
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Tonight, we will continue with our series on marriage. As I said last time, I am not an authority on marriage. But God is. My purpose is to preach Christ to you. And hopefully we will glean some practical things that God teaches us about marriage in the process.

Why preach about marriage? One, I love each of you who I serve. I want what is best for you. Two, I love Christ whose servant I am and want him to have the glory due unto him. That which glorifies him is that which is best for you. Three, in a few weeks, when I preach Rob and Kristyn's wedding, you two will be so nervous that you may not hear a word I say. So I want you to hear it now!

During that ceremony you each will take vows. The vows that we take at our marriage ceremony are of utmost importance because they are vows that we take before Almighty God. The marriage vow is not simply a nice phrase repeated before men. It is a vow made before God. The covenant we enter into on that day is not just a marriage covenant with each other but a covenant we make with God—especially when it is between two believers who each belong to Christ!

Christ says that what we do or do not do to a fellow believer we do or do not do unto him. (Mt 25: 40, 45) So what the husband does to his bride who belongs to Christ, the husband does to Christ! What the bride does to the husband who belongs to Christ, the bride does to Christ! This is one reason our vow to each other before God is so very important. Anyone who takes such things lightly is a fool.

**Proposition:** The marriage vow of husband and wife is important not only because we vow before God that we will keep it but because it glorifies Christ and his covenant vow to his elect bride by which he saves us.

Our text is found in Hosea 2. This is Christ's covenant vow to his bride, the church. This is the covenant Christ entered into in eternity when God the Father gave him his elect bride and he took us into marriage relation with himself as our Surety. This is the covenant that he makes with each of us personally through the Holy Spirit when he makes us hear the gospel and experience his covenant of grace in our hearts.

**Hosea 2: 19: And 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. 20: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.**

### **I WILL BETROTH THEE UNTO ME**

Note that Christ says this three times. It reminds us that we are saved by the three persons in the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

1 John 5: 7: For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Christ says, "*I betroth (espouse) thee to me!*" When Christ makes his marriage vow in our hearts, he brings us into marriage covenant with him and him alone—making us one with him and he with us.

Ephesians 5: 30: For we are members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Therefore, our glorious Husband says to the one he calls to faith in him that we must forsake all for him.

Luke 14: 33: So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Matthew 10:37: He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me:

Thus Christ effectually makes the believer willing to forsake all for him! We must forsake all our works and not even our dearest, nearest loved ones can come between the believer and Christ our Husband. It is impossible to be Christ's bride, in faithful submission to him, if we are unfaithfully united to this world, our works or even if there is any relationship more important to us than our relationship with Christ.

1 John 2:15: Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

This commitment to Christ and Christ alone is pictured in husband and bride leaving all and cleaving to one another in the holy marriage union. One of the first questions asked at a wedding is "Who gives this woman away to be married to this man?" The bride's father answers, "Her mother and I." Though it is not spoken, the grooms father and mother are agreeing to the same concerning their son. Christ said, "*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.*" For this cause, the man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his bride and the woman does likewise cleaving to her husband.

Then to the groom the question is asked, "Do you take this woman to yourself, to be your lawfully wedded wife, will you forsake all others and cleave only unto her?" The same is asked of the bride. Again, the reason is this,

Ephesians 5: 30: For we are members of Christ's 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.

It is as true of the woman as it is of the husband. The man alone is mentioned in Ephesians 5:31 because he is the head of his house and provider for his bride as is Christ. Only as the husband forsakes father and mother and cleaves to his wife will he glorify Christ, loving his bride as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

A commentator from 1400's said, "The...union between a man and his wife...is [nearer] than that which is between parents and children; for the wife must be cleaved unto, and father and mother forsaken: not that...the former relation between parents and children ceases;...so as to have the affection alienated from them, or to be disengaged from all...care and regard for them...but...[that] he shall quit the house of his father, and not bed and board there, and live with him as before; but having taken a wife to himself, shall live and cohabit with her."

A husband has not left father and mother and clung to his bride as one flesh, nor is he providing for his bride as Christ did for his, if he continues living under dad's roof with his bride. Of the friends who have spoken to me about marital problems, hands down, the most common cause is not forsaking father and mother and cleaving to one another. Most commonly it is by attempting to live under the parent's roof or being too dependent upon them. A close second is being critical of the spouse to father or mother or someone else. Never do that! Christ covered the sins of his bride; he did not expose them. Brethren, cover the sins of brethren. That is what you do to those you truly love!

Proverbs 10:12: Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

So Christ says, “I betroth thee to me!” Therefore, the believer forsakes all for Christ. Likewise, husband and wife forsake all for each other.

## **I WILL BETROTH THEE UNTO ME FOREVER**

Christ’s love for his elect bride never ends. God’s love for his elect is not based on anything in us. His love for his elect is according to his sovereign, free grace in Christ. Therefore, God’s love is everlasting for his people.

Jeremiah 31: 3: The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

In the context of our passage, Hosea is a type of Christ and Gomer is a type of Christ’s bride, each individual chosen child of God in particular. After Hosea married Gomer to himself she played the harlot. Eventually, she became bankrupt and was up for sale on a slave block. But Hosea did not forsake her, he loved her still!

Hosea 3: 1: Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of *her* friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.

God clearly declares that this picture of Hosea loving Gomer and buying her to himself, even after she played the adultress harlot is “*according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.*” Christ married his bride (God’s elect) in eternity when he betrothed us to himself in the everlasting covenant. In Adam we sinned and played the harlot. In ourselves as soon as we were born we did the same. Yet, after we betrayed Christ and played the harlot, God the Father told Christ, “Go yet, and love her, though she is an adulteress!” And Christ did so, paying the purchase price with his own precious blood because God’s love in Christ is unchangeable, everlasting love!

Romans 8: 39: [Nothing] shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, when husband and wife stand before God, they are asked, “Do you promise to love one another in joy or sorrow, in prosperity or adversity, as long as you both shall live.”

I know some are divorced, and some are divorced and remarried. With some, there was nothing you could do about your spouse committing fornication or abandoning you. With some, the divorce took place before God saved you. Others may have divorced and remarried in total disregard for the word and glory of God. But if you are a believer in Christ, leave the past in past. If Christ has forgiven your sin, it is forgiven. No believer ought to hold that against another believer.

That being said, understand this with God, there is no such thing as a biblical divorce. Marriage is for life before God.

Now, before someone starts trying to refute this truth in defense of yourself make certain you consider this in light of the gospel lest you refute away the beauty of Christ’s everlasting marriage to his bride!

God told Israel that though *they* divorced the wife of their youth and married another, before God, they were still married to the wife of their youth because God was witness to their covenant oath!

Malachi 2: 14: Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. 15: And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit.

God made Adam one bride because he made Christ one bride.

Malachi 2: 15:...And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16: For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away:

Israel leaving the wife of their youth pictured Israel leaving the covenant they made to God and marrying false gods. It is a picture of you and me leaving Christ when we sinned in the garden and went after our lovers of sinful self!

Yet, in that everlasting union God made between Christ and his bride in eternity, God made one bride for Christ that he might seek a godly seed. Christ entered covenant in eternity to save us and God cannot lie.

Therefore, even though we dealt treacherously against Christ our Husband and went after our lovers, God still regarded his elect married to Christ in the everlasting, unbreakable covenant of marriage. Oh, how glad we should be that God does not recognize divorce!

We live in a western culture where what most call love is only superficial based on some feature in the other person. So many blame marital discontent on their spouse. It is common to hear people speak of how their spouse changed and now they are not happy with them anymore.

Be sure to understand this. My responsibility as a husband to my wife has nothing to do with the kind of wife she is to me! What kind of wife were we to Christ? We left Christ and re-married the law when we came under the law's bondage. But Christ's love for his bride never changed. God still regarded his covenant. Therefore, before God his elect were married to Christ. So he looked at us only in Christ!

Ephesians 2: 4: But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5: **Even when we were dead in sins,...**

Romans 5:8: But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, **while we were yet sinners**, Christ died for us.

Brethren, thank God that "*he hates putting away!*" Therefore, God saved us in spite of us and produced a godly seed in Christ by his grace! For that reason alone, constrained by Christ's unchangeable love who loved us while as yet we were unlovable, let us let nothing come between us and our spouse. Most importantly of all, let us let nothing come between us and Christ!

One more thing is important to note. Our love for our spouse effects our love for our brethren. In the midst of speaking of brotherly love, the Holy Spirit reminds us:

Hebrews 13: 4: Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

He is teaching us that brotherly love will be strong when our love to our spouse is strong at home! My love to my spouse even effects my love to my brethren in the church, as well as my love to Christ! God says our prayers are even hindered by our lack of love to our spouse.

1 Peter 3:7: Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

God is teaching us to make certain our marriage vow to our spouse is held in highest honor and esteem in all things, remembering, the marriage bed is honorable! He teaches us to let the husband not neglect his wife or the wife her husband in the marriage bed! The next verse says,

Hebrews 13: *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

Let each of us see to it that we love our spouse and devote ourselves to them, being content, from the constraint of Christ's vow to us, "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*"

But if I do not love my spouse and I end up proving I do not love my brethren then I prove I am not truly married to Christ "*and whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*"

Our love to our spouse effects all those around us! Just look at the society we live in if you doubt this word of our God!

So if we are having trouble loving as we ought, where should we look?

### **CHRIST BETROTHED US TO HIMSELF IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, MERCY AND FAITHFULNESS**

Christ vowed to lay down his life for his bride—"*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.*" And that he did!

"*In righteousness and judgment*" means Christ upheld his covenant vow and fulfilled the law of God for his bride. The law we broke in our first Adam was upheld and honored by the last Adam. Christ fulfilled his covenant vow toward his bride even after we went after our lovers: our false gods, our sins, our religious works and became married to the law. Christ loved us by laying down his life for his bride. He bore her sins and bore the death penalty she deserved in order to satisfy justice so that our marriage to him is in lawful righteousness.

Romans 7: 1: Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2: For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. 3: So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

When Christ betroths us to himself in the experience of grace, the Spirit makes the believer know that by the body of Christ bearing our sin and dying under divine justice, our former husband (the law) is dead to us and we to him so that we are now lawfully married to Christ. Though our marriage to the law was not in faithfulness, Christ would not take us to be his bride until he had satisfied all the law's demands so that that husband was dead and he might marry us lawfully. Christ betrothed his elect bride to himself in righteousness and in judgment.

“*In lovingkindness, and in mercies*” means at the same time, Christ was showing us his great love and tender mercies!

Psalm 85:10: Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

God can show us all his lovingkindness and tender mercies in Christ and in no way diminish his righteousness and judgment because in Christ God is both just and the Justifier of those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! This is the very purpose for which Christ came: to declare the righteousness of God, how God might be just and the Justifier of all who believe on Christ. (Rom 3: 26)

“*I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD*” means even when we were dead in sins with a heart that was enmity against God, Christ sought out his bride. Even when we tried to keep running away from him while dead in sins, Christ came and wooed us to himself and made us willing to bow to him by making us know the LORD. This Christ did by his great faithfulness wherewith he vowed to love us forever!

Now, believer that gives some weight to our vow to our spouse to love them “for better or for worse, until death parts us!” Come what may...

Ephesians 5: 25: Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26: That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27: 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. 28: So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

Do you see how important God’s word is to God! Do you see how important God’s word is to you and me who are saved by his covenant word? Let us never take our marriage vows lightly! Let us cast ourselves on God’s mercy asking him to make us faithful to Christ and to our spouse.

Numbers 30:2: If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

Ecclesiastes 5: 4: When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath* no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5: Better *is it* that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

It is so important for believers to marry believers because only believers can enter into this. Only believers are constrained by Christ’s love toward us so that they look to Christ and remember that all God’s promises are yes and amen!

2 Corinthians 1: 19: For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us...was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. 20: For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Here is the vow: “Do you promise in the sight of Almighty God and these witnesses, to take this woman to be your bride, to be to her a true and devoted husband? That you will love, honor and protect her in joy or sorrow, in prosperity or adversity, and leaving all others will you cleave to her and her alone as long as you both shall live?” Christ said, “I will!” Now, may God give us grace to look to Christ our only Strength, and to behold our believing spouse perfect in him, and for the sake of Christ say with more and more love as the years go by, “I will!”

**Amen!**