

to His praise and honour and glory.

Amen.

No. 4

*Preached on Lord's Day evening, 12th January, 1964.*

Text : "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".—Ephes. v. 31.

THE Apostle, writing here to the Ephesians, might well have added by the Holy Spirit this following verse, "This is a great mystery ; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church". There is, in this chapter and in this subject, a very great depth of divine truth. It seems beyond me to even touch or enter upon, it is so blessed, so sublime and so heavenly. But we would start, if the Lord will, in this way, by looking at the text first in its natural setting. This verse or scripture first appears, as you know, in the second chapter of Genesis. (Adam was created. He had no parents. He had no father and mother to leave, and so it was needful for another creation, as it were.) "It is not good that the man should be alone ; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. ii. 18). And so that help meet was formed out of man. This is a very blessed and divine institution made by God in the time of man's innocence. It is God's order and it is a wondrous institution. It does not fall to all to enter into the married state, but I suppose it does to most. It was never the lot of the favoured Eunuch in Philip's day. But he had a God, a blessed God, a faithful God, a Friend, a Brother, in Christ. He was joined unto the living ; he was a member of that mystical body of Christ. He had this earthly and natural lack and yet he lacked nothing. He might have said : "Having Jesus I have an immortal

store, I have a Husband, I have a Mother and Father. I have all things. I have Christ and Christ is God's. All is mine. The world is mine in one sense if I have Christ, and all the provisions and supplies in it. I lack nothing if Christ is mine." But for most people this is the divinely appointed pathway for them, that "a man leave his father and mother". The appointed time comes when they leave them behind. God finds for them (where this is of God and only then) the right help meet.

At the first wedding I conducted here last March (I don't know whether you remember; one or two will, I feel) I spoke to our dear young friends and told them how their two lives which commenced in different places, at different times and in different circumstances, had now been brought together in the inscrutable wisdom of God, according to His will and divine providence for them in their lives. I think I likened it unto two ships leaving different ports and passing somewhere in mid-ocean, perhaps communicating with each other and brought together. Well now, in that case and in all cases, there is the time when one leaves home and parents to be joined unto his wife. Where this is of God it is a very blessed thing, certainly not to be regarded lightly and wantonly. It is a holy institution. And why was it ordained? It was ordained for the mutual comfort and mutual society that the one ought to have of the other. So there is union, joining and communion. Even viewed naturally this is very precious, but when there is a double union, where the two parties joined together are one in Christ, well that is a heavenly union; it is a double union; they are joined together in a double way. They are taught this, that although the time is fast coming when they shall be severed by death, as to the body and the earthly union, yet the heavenly never will, it will go on. How blessed it is for a husband to have a wife who is a sister in the Lord Jesus! And for one to have a husband, a brother in the Lord Jesus, that is real union and communion.

But I would pause here and just say this to those who have not entered upon this pathway; there may be a sense of loneliness and loss as to the natural side of it, but seek grace, dear friend, to look beyond that. Seek a

husband in Christ, in Himself. Let Christ be your husband, no other. If God has not appointed you a husband, you will not have a husband; it is His will you should not; let the matter rest there and go no further. But let this go further, seek Christ as your Husband. He is a Husband to the widow as well as to the one who has never had a husband and never will have one. Better to have Christ as your Husband than to have an earthly husband, and when it comes to being glorified, whatever the earthly relationship has been, or has not been, there will be no lack there. There will be no deficiency if you have no husband. There will not be anybody missing. If you have no wife there will not be anybody missing. If you have no children, there will not be any missing in Heaven. You will not have any cause or reason to look around in Heaven for so-and-so. Oh, no! I do not believe for one moment that it is like that. There will not be anyone outside of Heaven who was ordained for Heaven. Whoever has a husband and whoever has not a husband in the earth, also concerning our relationships and families, there will be no lack; no vacant places; all will be there. Not an hoof will be left behind, not one. You know, if it were possible that in Heaven there would be, I was going to say time (but there is no time there—you know what I mean) to look around for so-and-so, you see perhaps there would be many, many disappointments, many tears, but that cannot be so in Heaven, can it? What is the chief joy and what is the centre of everything in Heaven? It is Christ. Christ first. There is a oneness, a completeness, a perfection in the body of Christ. It is complete now, though the people of God be scattered strangers, as we read in Peter's epistle. They are elect, one, complete, bound, cemented together with eternal love and by that eternal union which cannot be dissolved in any sense or at any time.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother". What cause? What is the cause? The cause is love, where it is God-appointed. For this cause of love a man shall leave his father and mother and his own home, not because he ceases to love them, but because it is ordained, because God has found him an help meet, one

to love, one to respond in love, one to reciprocate, one to share—both to share love and to share the burden of appointed things. That is why. For this cause, a blessed cause, is it not? And for this same cause of love God's dear Son so left His glory—Heaven—for a season.

"And shall be joined unto his wife". Here is the great mystery of it and the blessedness of it—"shall be joined unto his wife"—for whom He came. He came to redeem the church, to wash it from its pollution, cleanse it from its own blood in His own blood, and to clothe it in such a righteousness as shall be like this—that He might present it to Himself a glorious church. In sin—inglorious; but in Himself, a glorious church "not having spot", no, not one spot. Not the smallest sin, if I may use that word, although there is no such thing as a small sin. All sin is on one level and plane—it is sin. We age because of sin. We become wrinkled, we shrink. Normally we grow up and become greater in size and weight, and then we get smaller; there is a shrinkage which is natural in the body. It is time that does it, and yet sin does it; sin is the cause. The passage of time brings that to pass. But in the body of Christ, there is no wrinkle or any such thing, nothing like it; "But that it should be holy and without blemish". And so Christ gives to His own Church, His own bride, all that He has—Himself. And when a husband and wife come together what really takes place? They have everything in common, or should. There is that which is equal, although the man is still head of the wife, but in the distribution of things there is an equality. The one says to the other, "Now this is what I have and I give it all to you". The other says the same and so they give what they have to each other and they make it one, and they give themselves to each other, making themselves one, though God makes them one. "What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder". Oh, no! When it comes to hidden things, distressing things, there may be this: "Well, I have got some debts that you must know about. I have got something else you must know about in my past. I want to tell you. Now is the time for me to tell you, that there might be a clearance in this matter. I tell you

what I have got, and I tell you what I have not got. I tell you the good things and tell you the bad things. I must tell you all." They do. Sometimes there might be a keeping back, a holding back, a covering over of certain things in the past and in the present in this relationship, but that is unwise. Let there be a full, free and open disclosure of that matter, repentance and forgiveness sought. And where love reigns there will be that forgiveness and there will be a forgetting. This is how it is naturally. Now see how it is in grace. There is the poor bride: "I have nothing to bring thee, my dear Bridegroom and Husband. I am all a mass of filth and wickedness. I have great debts which I cannot pay." What says the Bridegroom? "Let Me take your debts; charge them upon Me; I will pay them. I will satisfy your creditors. I will freely pay them and it is needful for Me to pay them in this way, by giving Myself for you. I cannot pay in money's worth; I cannot pay in kind. I have to lose my life for you, my people. I have to be so cruelly treated by wicked men, yes, and by you. You must needs treat Me in this way." Now Christ does this very blessedly and that is love. Love covereth a multitude of sins. When it comes to experience that is so where there is repentance and confession, but not without. All the solemn defects, all the debts incurred by the bride of Christ, the Church, are all covered, all forgiven now.

"All is settled  
And my soul approves it well." (582)

But there is the experience, is there not? Why, God the Lord, the Spirit, brings you into sweet union, poor sinner, with your Heavenly Boaz, with Christ. Then He will tell you this. He may not use the same words, but He will give you to feel it, whatever He speaks into your soul. He will say this: "I freely forgive—yes, all. I freely all give too, all that you need. You are homeless, you are fatherless and motherless and you are on the downward trend to hell. Now all that is needful for salvation, for deliverance from the pit, I will see to, I will do it. Nay, I have done it and now I am telling you that it is done."

I myself much like this word and if the Spirit speak it into a poor sinner's heart, it will be so blessed and sweet

and will supply all the needs of the soul. We get so complicated and feel that even if God does come to us, there will be so much for Him to unravel, it will be a long time and process. But this is the word : "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee ; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk ?" (Mark ii. 9). Now Christ has only to say that and your salvation is complete. God has only to speak it, to speak the effect of what He has done ; to communicate it into your soul ; you have only to receive Christ in that way, and He is your Bridegroom. And as to receiving Christ, you know what one dear servant of God said in this pulpit, I think it was fifteen or sixteen years ago, according to the account. He said, "You can receive Christ in the line of a hymn." And you can. You can receive a full Christ in that way. Tell me how else will you receive Christ ? Well, you may say, "Not through a hymn". Well, perhaps not, but through one of His words spoken into your heart. Just one or two words may be, and you have Christ in your heart in the fullest measure you ever will have this side of Heaven.

"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." Now I want to speak of this in a more collective way. I think I told you this morning what this has meant to me in connection with my call to you here at West Street. How that early in 1961 my dear Pastor sat on my bed (I was unwell and he knew I had been here a few times) and he repeated this verse to me just as it is here, the text. He made me think, as I told you, and then some weeks later I believe the Lord repeated it with some degree of power and sweetness in my own heart when I was in the High Street in Lewes. Then I did think more deeply and seriously, Is this for West Street ? Is this the call ? Is this the word ? Is it God's will that it shall be for this cause ? Well now, this word, especially the first half of it, has already been fulfilled. I had to leave my father and I had to leave my mother. I do not mean my earthly father and mother ; I mean my spiritual father and mother. The Lord, as you will remember from last Lord's Day, worked in my poor

heart before I ever went to The Dicker or knew there was such a place as The Dicker, and while there the Lord did give me, as I believe, a spiritual father in the person of my dear Pastor. I have many regrets now that I did not tell him more than I did as to the profit I hope I received from his ministry. When it came to leaving I went to him and confessed that. I said to him, "I am sorry that I have not told you more than the little I have told you as to the benefit and blessing I hope I have received from your ministry." He thanked me for telling him, although I am still sorry I did not tell him more. I know it is not too late while we are both spared. I often think now of things he said ; they come back to me. Also, I did not appreciate the ministry as I ought to have done while I was there. Now I do not hear many preach, only myself, and it is a great trial to me. "Am I being blessed ?" is what I ask myself. "Am I receiving anything for myself through the ministry ?" I was suddenly plunged into this, as you will know, in 1960. I cannot see that I have gleaned much from my own ministry in the past three and a half years. I hope I have been blessed in the pulpit—once in particular. I felt I could have left the pulpit and gone to Heaven, but such seasons are very few and far between in my experience.

So I had to leave my father ; there was a parting time. I knew he felt it and I know I felt it, felt it keenly and sorely. I had been brought up there, you see. My soul had been fed. There was food there for my soul at The Dicker. And as to my mother, well you see I was brought forth there into the church. My mother brought me forth there in 1951 when I felt the ordinances laid upon my mind. Naturally I told my Pastor, and to my surprise and wonder I found that a number of dear friends had been waiting and watching for me, praying for me, bringing me to the birth in that sense. They brought me forth, I believe, by their prayers. By their prayers was I given unto them. But after eleven or twelve years the time came when we had to part, but if the matter is of the Lord, I believe He has provided me a wife, that is, the church of God here, this Cause of truth. I did not touch upon this at all this morning in dealing with my call here.

I only gave you one side of it all the way through. I do not think I gave the least hint of what took place here. I do not really know much about it. A little has been told me, mostly in correspondence, of your side of it. The little I do know gives me to feel with thankfulness that there was something mutual in it and there must be something mutual. One cannot be married unto oneself ; there must be two parties. Now, has the Lord blessed this union ? Has He smiled upon it ? Has He granted any fruit ? There will be fruit if it is real ; there must be. It may be a long time forthcoming. Has there been any fruit ? Well, there has been. In February, 1962, one Lord's Day, I believe two precious souls were wrought upon at the same time. They were brought forth. Very different cases : very, very different. The Lord brought them forth. There was a union ; there was fruitfulness. This is for His praise and His glory, I trust. "The children which God hath given me" (Is. viii. 18). Now that is what there will be in this union—children brought forth ; babes given ; new life made manifest ; a movement ; a struggle ; a bringing forth ; a labour. There will be labour, there must be. There must be naturally a labouring to bring forth a child, pain and anguish, and when these two were brought forth there was a lot of labour. I was in a particularly heavy trial at that time in my own soul and also relative to this Cause of truth. There was much that distressed me. There was loss at that time, you will remember ; the Lord took away. That caused me some nights of wakefulness. But the Lord crowned His Gospel with success ; made the word profitable ; made it fruitful ; there was a bringing forth. Now there is the true and the proper sign and token that we must look for—fruit. But this does not necessarily only mean the bringing forth of precious souls in that way. I believe the Lord may work, I hope He will, in hearts and in certain cases where there will possibly not be the bringing forth to be added to the church, that is this church. The main thing is to be joined to Christ, the Church of the Living God ; that is the first thing. And if that fruitfulness is brought forth, then there will be the sure evidence that our union is right and that we are one.

Now I am going to tell you something I have never told you before. In 1961, some time after I received the invitation to serve for three months in 1962, in seeking prayerfully to consider the matter before the Lord, He led me to this word in the second Book of Kings, the 19th chapter and the 29th verse, and it has remained with me ever since, and I have been watching this and still am very closely. "And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same ; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof." I will tell you how the Lord interpreted this to me. "Ye shall eat this year". Now that year was 1961, when you first invited me to serve for three months in the following year. "Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves." In other words, something formulating. God said in effect to me this word, "You have not got to touch it because it grows of itself. It does not need handling in any way, or cultivating, it is growing of itself." Well now, did I put my hand to the matter ? Judge you. I have told you my exercises. I told you I could not possibly reply until and unless the Lord appeared. Now do you judge He did appear for me ? I believe He did. And I believe He brought me into such freedom and liberty that I could freely say to you, "Yes, I will come for three months." Now that was that year.

"And in the second year, that which springeth forth of the same". Now what is "the same"? What springeth of the same ? Well, out of that first year, out of the exercise, out of the testing, the proving, there was that which sprang forth of the same. What was it ? In this second year this will be the exercise for you. There will be a further testing. You will serve the church in this second year. It sprung out of the first year. It grew of itself under the Lord's hand. There was no need to touch it. Now do you think I did touch it, or put my hand to it ? God is the judge, but judge ye ; the Lord knoweth.

"And in the third year" (that was last year, 1963, when the Pastorate commenced) "sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof". Now that

is the year when I feel the sowing began in earnest. "Sow ye this year" and from this year onwards. "Sow ye and reap". What is there in the union we have been speaking of? There is a sowing; there is a reaping too of fruit unto life eternal. "And plant vineyards." Now what that means I cannot tell you. I will be plain; I simply cannot tell you what this really means. "And eat the fruits thereof." "The husbandman shall be first partaker of the fruits" (II Tim. ii. 6).

Now in each of these three years and seasons, in each case, there is this—eat. "Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year, that which springeth of the same". But in the third year, not eat first, but sow first and eat afterwards. Now we have had some things to eat, have we not—I mean spiritually? Eat—what does that mean? Partake of, enter into, walk in. We have had some things to walk in together, have we not? We have had some things that are joyful; we have had some things that are bitter. So there will be bitter and sweet things to be eaten. But if the Lord's presence and blessing is realised in our hearts and His divine approbation, the bitter will be made sweet and palatable, and will result in His glory and honour.

Now there I must leave the matter. "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".

Amen.