

[Message] Now we turn to the Scripture reading Romans chapter 7, verse 1 through verse 6 as we continue our exposition of Paul's letter to the Romans. Next Sunday is the Sunday before Christmas, and we will make a slight diversionary tactic because it is Christmas; that is it is near Christmas and we will next Sunday give a message that pertains more directly to Christmas, and we will drop our Romans series for that occasion. But this is Romans chapter 7, verse 1 through verse 6, and our subject for this morning and the exposition that follows will be "Marital Union with Christ." The apostle says,

"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? 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. 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. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ (Now, incidentally, these expressions that the apostle are using in almost every case stress not so much the state that follows the death, but rather stress the act of death itself. This literally is wherefore, my brethren ye have been put to death 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. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful impulses which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law (released from the law), that being dead wherein we were held (now, of course, the law is not dead but as you might suspect this should be rendered having died to that by which we were being held); that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

The apostle stressing the law has not died but we have died with respect to the law. May God add his blessing to the reading of his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer removed from audio.]

[Message] As I mentioned in reading the Scripture our subject for this morning is "Marital Union with Christ." Romans is Paul's masterpiece on salvation; salvation from the penalty of sin, salvation from the power of sin, and even salvation from the presence of sin. The apostle has been discussing the doctrine of justification by faith that is the act of God by which the believer is declared righteous through the imputation of the merits of our substitute the Lord Jesus Christ. Justification is something done for us, and it is done for us by our substitute. And then having discussed that in the later part of the 5th chapter and the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup>, the apostle began his discussion of sanctification, the process of bringing the believer into likeness to Jesus Christ. It is something not done for

us so much as done in us. And it is made possible also by Jesus Christ our representative. Great stress rests in this chapter on our union with our Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctification, we are in the midst of that part of the apostle exposition.

Now when we say sanctification we, Protestants, are likely to hear these words and feel rather uncomfortable: sanctification, holiness, holy because we sense hypocrisy and false piety when a person speaks about sanctification. This distrust of the halo is carried so far that one Protestant writer has even put his greatest truths in the mouths of degenerate nobleman, a poor ragged alcoholic in order that he might try to fight shy of any suggestion of sanctimoniousness. We distrust sanctimoniousness. The apostle does too. He speaks of sanctification, that's something else.

There is an interesting episode in a work written by an Italian author. There was a poor village. There was a desire on the part of the village to erect a wooden cross and set it on a hill which overlooked the village. And so in order to construct the cross they sought out the village carpenter. He was a man by the name of Utimio, and he was commissioned to do the work. Well he finished the work, but the bishop was a long time in coming by and officiating at the ceremony by which it would set on that little hill.

Now it so happened that master Utimio, the master carpenter was no paragon of virtue. In fact, he was surprised to even be given the job because of the kind of life for which he was known in the community. His workshop was also known as nothing but a place where lude and blasphemous language was carried on for years. Cursing and profanities came naturally to his lips. His wife was a quiet, patient woman, and she had suffered under his wickedness for many years. He was not all that honest either and was known again throughout the community for being dishonest. But now something unexpected happens. He has finished the cross. It's polished, but now he's had to stand it in the corner of his little shop. So there it is standing over in the corner, and when he comes in, in the morning he feels as if something has changed in his shop. When his friends come in with their blasphemous talk master Utimio's glance often steals timidly over to the cross as if he wanted to beg for forgiveness because of what's going on in his shop. In the evening, he feels as if he ought to say goodnight to the cross over in the corner. His wife has even noticed a change in his attitudes and in his life, but she doesn't know the reason for it yet. She thinks at first that her husband is sick or something. And then the author who has given us this story goes on to comment that "if such a transforming influence can be exerted by a piece of wood in the corner of a workshop, how much greater must be in influence of the living Christ who once was hanging on just such a piece of wood, but who now is no longer there but since his resurrection is with us daily and hourly."

That's really what sanctification is from the human standpoint. It is living in the presence of the risen Christ. And it really is helpful for us to remember that by virtue of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ, he is with us constantly. In fact, more closely with us than a piece of wood standing over in the corner of our workshop might be if we were carpenters.

Now the apostle also speaks of glorification in this wonderful Epistle to the Romans. But that's in the next chapter or so, and there he will talk about the end of the process of sanctification in glorification.

Now we're in the section in which he has been showing us how to be saved from the power of sin in our daily lives. Since only Christ can live the Christian life we need

him. And Paul's words are designed to show us how we have him. He's talking about union, judicial union, in the first part of chapter 6, moral union in the later part of chapter 6, marital union here, spiritual or dynamic union, a union with the Holy Spirit involved in the first part of chapter 8, and in fact, we in one sense may go on and speak of the later part of the chapter as expressive of an eternal union because of the words the apostle speaks there. The figure that Paul has chosen in this part of Romans to express this particular relationship, this relationship of sanctification, both the process and particularly the union on which it is based is the figure of marriage, because the aim of natural life is the establishment of a home with a family. And so our marriage to our Lord Jesus Christ is designed to have spiritual significance that corresponds to the natural realm.

Everyone's interested in marriage. There is the courtship and the excitement of it. Then there is the wedding and the wedding ceremony, the wedding rehearsal when most grooms are most nervous, then the wedding ceremony itself, and the life that follows. Naturally through the years I've been called upon to perform many wedding ceremonies. There is a point in the ceremony in which I use when I will say, "Will you join your right hands together," and then in the light of their joining their hands together I will reach over and put my hand upon top of theirs and I will say, "For as much as John Doe and Mary Jo have considered together in holy wedlock, witnessing the same before God and this company, and have pledged that they will be faithful to each other, I pronounce that they're husband and wife together according to the word of God and the law of the state and in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." And sometimes when I have my hand on theirs I can feel the husband's hand, now he doesn't grip my hand, but I happen to have my hand on top of his and that beautiful bride's and I can feel his hand just tighten a little like this, and I can say that's going to be a good marriage. There is a genuine love relationship there.

Well the apostle speaks about marriage here and it's I guess one of the most beautiful illustrations of the relationship that we have to the Lord Jesus Christ. The woman's standard of love is the standard of submission, and she is to be submissive to her husband as the church is to be submissive to Jesus Christ. And the husband's standard is a divine standard because he's to love her as Christ loved the church. Dr. Barnhouse used to say that the wife has a human standard to live up to. The husband has a divine standard to live up to. Well they are both divine. And so in his case he must love her enough to be willing to be crucified for her, and put himself between any danger that might come to her. Marriage also involves the family altar and discipline. Discipline in the family. The father who loves his children will discipline his children. The father who doesn't care for his children will not discipline them. And I say to you that you are answerable to the Lord for the disciplining of your children. If your son destroys your neighbor's property the neighbor can sue you for it. You generally speaking are liable for what they do. God holds you responsible also for the way in which you raise your children. And you parents if you don't discipline your children and teach them what it is to obey later on when they are grown it will be that much more difficult for them to learn how to obey God which is the greatest obedience of all. God says he who spares the rod hates his son but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

And then there is the relationship between the husband and the wife, in which the husband is to love his wife and to manifest his love to her and to tell her that he loves her. All of these things are bound up in this wonderful relationship of marriage. And the aim

of spiritual life corresponds to the aim of marital life for after the courtship and after the marriage ideally there follows a family, physical progeny. And in the case of our union with Jesus Christ fruit, spiritual fruit. And if as believers in Jesus Christ we don't really have spiritual fruit it may be because the relationship, the intercourse, the communion that exists between the believer in Jesus Christ is not of the kind to produce spiritual fruit. Only he can produce that fruit. It's just a magnificent arrangement the apostle speaks about here and that's in the background.

Now he uses a little illustration in order to introduce us to the effects of marriage with Jesus Christ. That church in Rome had a number of Jewish people who were susceptible to backsliding back under the Law of Moses. Now the law cannot save and it cannot sanctify, and so the apostle wants to stress the fact that having believed in Jesus Christ and having been married to him we passed out of the sphere of the Law of Moses. The connection is made in the very first verse, "or" that lets us know, that disjunctive conjunction, let's us know that what he's going to say now is related to something he said previously in the chapter that has just been completed. And the fact that he says also the law has dominion over a man gives us a clue as to the place that he has in mind, because we've had that word dominion. We had it back in chapter 6, verse 14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under the law but under grace."

So the apostle has made a statement that demands further explanation. "You are not under law." He had talked about what being under grace means. Now he's going to talk about what not being under the law means. So that's the connection, "Or don't you know I speak to those who know law, how the law has dominion over a man so long as he lives?"

Now there are commentators who have a great deal of difficulty with Paul in Romans 7. I remember reading a review of one particular commentator's book on the Epistle to the Romans. The reviewer said when Paul reaches Romans chapter 7 he leaves the author of this book behind or something to that effect. Someone else has said, "All commentators are simply common taters." Now only a southern can understand language like that [Laughter] but nevertheless that's what they said, "All are common taters." For example Professor C. H. Dodd who was one of the best known New Testament professors in the first part of the 20th Century said that when Paul gets into his illustration in Romans chapter 7 he gets so mixed up and confused that one might just as well forget the illustration.

Well the confusion, my friend, does not exist in Paul's mind. The confusion existed in Professor Dodd's mind, and now he knows because he is no longer with us. But Paul's illustration is very simple, but you see people read this without paying a great deal of attention to what Paul writes. They say look here, here is Paul. He says the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. And then what does he do in his illustration? He has the man die and the woman go free to be married to someone else. So there is an inner contradiction in what Paul says. He should have used a man as an illustration if he says that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives but you see his thrust belongs to the woman. So he's confused they say. No. The confusion exists with these commentators, because the apostle uses the word man in a generic sense.

Now I'm sorry if there are some feminists in the audience. It's perfectly good English to use the term man in a generic sense. It's perfectly all right to say we are all members of mankind. We don't have to say we're all members of person-kind; mankind.

Anybody with any common intelligence knows that the term man is used generically. We are hu-persons? No. We are humans. [Laughter]

Now the apostle uses a Greek term, *anthropos*, in that first verse which is in occasion generic. That's the sense in which he uses it. He mean here that the law has dominion over man, that is a man or a woman for we are both members of humanity; hu-personity. I don't know how I would get along with this if I had to be consistent. I think I would have to go out and commit philological suicide or something like that. [Laughter] But anyway, this is man; that is man or woman. And then he properly uses the illustration of the man dying because the woman is going to be married to two husbands, and the second husband is Jesus Christ. She's married to the old man, and she's going to be married to Jesus Christ. How would it be if we used the illustration of the man? He's married the woman and now he's a man married to Christ. I wouldn't like that. I like the way Paul has done it. It just seems to be me that the apostle is smarter than these "common taters." That's what they are they are commentators, and he's the one that has written the language which all these commentators ought to pour over a little more. Later on when he used the term husband he will use the Greek term that refers to the male as over and against the female or the adult male as over against a child.

So Paul is perfectly clear. It is the commentators that are unclear. So the apostle's illustration then is the illustration of a man and woman who are married. He says the law has dominion over a man or a woman as long as their mate is living. But when their mate dies they are freed to be married to another. If a husband dies the woman is free to be married to another and she's not called an adulteress if she is married to another. That's Paul's simple, little illustration.

Now we must ask ourselves what are the identities if this is Paul's simple, little illustration. We have a husband. We have a wife. We have a death. We have a law. What are these four things in his illustration? What are they designed to signify?

Now remember that in this section Paul is really ringing the changes on this idea with union with Christ. We are bound up with what he has done. He has acted for us. And he has used the figure of a king and his subjects in the first part of chapter 6 where he talked there about dominion. Sin shall not have dominion over you. Let not sin rule in your life. So it's a picture of a king and his subjects. And then in the last part of chapter 6 he talked about a master and his slaves. He said we are not slaves of sin or servants of sin. We are to be servants of righteousness. So it's a figure of a master and a slave. And now he is just saying the same thing but the figure is husband and wife and marriage.

So that's the figure. Who's the husband in the figure, the husband that dies, the husband that's married to the woman who marries Christ but the husband who has died? Well since he says we are released from the law a couple of times, verse 4; we have been brought to death by the law, verse 6; we have been released from the law, it's clear that the husband is related to the law. And since he's also said back in chapter 6, verse 6, "Knowing this that the old man has been crucified together with him," and we said that's all we were in Adam. I've heard women speak about their husband as the old man. But anyway that's not really what Paul is talking about. But he is talking about the old man under the law, all that we were in Adam.

So when the old man dies all that we were in Adam comes to an end. The husband then is the old man under the law. Fifteen hundred years of bondage Israel had

lived under. It's called a yoke of bondage in the New Testament. Who is the wife? Well she is the person who even in the two relationships, married to the old man and then married to the risen man, the Lord Jesus Christ is the same person. Most of us sitting in this audience are probably believers. We have been born again. Isn't it sad how the present society of which we are apart has prostituted the term, born again? Man cannot even run for political office now if he is not born again. And yet the term does not have the significance that it really has in Holy Scripture.

When I was first converted, born again was not very common. In fact, Donald Grey Barnhouse came to Alabama and stood up in the South Highlands Presbyterian Church and said, "Ye must be born again," people whispered around what in the world does he mean by that? And he stressed this and we were out one afternoon at a tea before these meetings began with about eight young couples and about seven of us weren't saved. Seven of the couples about four were Episcopalians who went to the Saint Mary's Episcopal Church which was about a block and a half away or so from the South Highlands Presbyterian Church. We all traveled in the same society in the city of Birmingham. And some of them when they visited they heard Barnhouse say born again, they ran immediately to their rector and said what's this being born again? He said the in Episcopal church we don't believe in being born again.

Well born again, when this transpires something is still the same. Now I was born again through the preaching of Donald Grey Barnhouse in Birmingham, but I didn't change my name. I was still Samuel Lewis Johnson, Jr. Samuel Lewis Johnson, Jr. and yet the Bible says, "Ye that is in Christ is a new creation." There's something that survived. When they met me on the street after my conversion they said, "Hello Lewis." They didn't give me a new name, but I was a new creature. There was something, however, that survived. And in fact, some of my old, old friends that I see on occasion in Birmingham or Charleston, South Carolina I'm sure they look at me and say he may be a preacher and we see some of the same old Lewis in him, because some of it is still there. It has been almost forty years. It takes a long time for the Holy Spirit to work with something so poor as this. The material is not very good. I'm sure there've been many committee meetings in heaven, now this is speaking really humanly, and a Calvinist probably ought not speak like this. [Laughter] But anyway, there has been many committee meetings in heaven, now what in the world are we going to do with him? But fortunately the Trinity perseveres and pursuing grace. There is something that persists, continues, that's the wife. Our inmost personality, that which survives all changes moral or physical retains it's identity under all conditions of existence, and when I get to heaven my name is still Samuel Lewis Johnson, Jr. New creation, born again, something the politicians don't fully understand, but nevertheless, I'm still the same old person.

What's the death? Well the death's clear. It's our co-crucifixion with the Lord Jesus when our representative died on the cross. That's when we died. When he died, for he acted for all in him. And all who are in him are going to be resurrected, Paul said, too. And what's the law? Well that's clear. It's the Mosaic law. In a moment he will say in verse 7, "May I not know sin except through the law; for I would not have known about coveting except the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'"

So he's talking about the husband, the old man under the law which has come to death in his co-crucifixion with Christ who died for sin. The wife, our inmost personality which survives all the changes; the death is that co-crucifixion with him; the law is the

Mosaic law. The apostle is making the same point that he made in chapters 6 when he says the old man has been crucified together with him this time just by a fresh analogy.

There's a story about a judge who had a man come before him who had claimed to be born again. And this individual had been charged with thievery. Well it so happened that this man had been a thief most of his life, and he was converted. He was finally though caught in the act. He gave in to the old temptation to steal, and he wanted to give the judge a little lecture in theology hoping that perhaps in so doing he'd have a little mercy. So he explained to the judge that he'd been converted. And he just yielded to the old lust to steal, but he says, "Judge, since I've been converted, since I've been born again, I have two natures. And it was my old nature that caused me to steal." And then he threw himself on the mercy of the court. The judge says well, okay. I'm glad you told me this story. I appreciate the theology. I here sentence your old nature to thirty days in jail, but I'm sorry you'll have to go along to keep it company. [Laughter] We are still identified with what we were.

So the law then, Paul says, is not dead. It's the individual who in Christ has died to the law. And now he's married to someone else.

Now that has certain consequences and the apostle speaks of those consequences in verse 4 through verse 6. The first thing is that we have been released from the law. Verse 6, "Now we have been released from the law. Verse 4, "Therefore, my brethren, you have been put to death by the law." So we're released from the law. It's perfectly all right to sing, "Free from the law oh happy condition. Jesus hath bleed and there is remission. Cursed by the law and bruised by the Fall, grace has redeemed us once for all." It is one of the unfortunate things about some reformed theology that it's had difficulty in extricating itself from relationship to the Law of Moses. And very frequently Reformed theologians are very legalistic. They ought not to be because they have an understanding of the grace of God in salvation, but they've often confused their own doctrine of grace by putting the believer under the law, and the result is frequently hypocrisy, arrogance, feeling of depression, feeling of inability to produce fruit.

There was a Bible teacher, a well-known Bible teacher that I use to think a great deal of that who near the end of his life told often in his ministry he'd have people come to him and try to put him under the law. He said one man came to him one time and was trying to get him to acknowledge that he was still under the law and he said but I'm already married. And the fellow went right on and talked about putting him under the law, but he said I'm already married. He said that two or three times and finally the fellow said, "What in the world does getting married have to do with it?" And he said, "I'm married to Christ. I'm already married. I don't need to be married to the law. I'm married to Christ. I am one who has been raised from the dead and I am married to him." That's the way we are. We are married to Christ. The means to this freedom is the cross. The death is the basis of our justification. It is the basis of our sanctification. It's the basis of our emancipation from the law itself.

Just recently I read a statement by Thomas Goodwin who was a 17th Century president of Motlin College in Oxford. And he said, "In God's sight there are two men Adam and Jesus Christ. And these two men have all other men hanging at their girdle strings." You just picture two men. There is Adam. There is Christ. And hanging from their girdle are all other men. All men hanging from the girdle of Adam because he's the first man of the human race and when men sinned they sinned in Adam and Adam took

all of them with him into the sphere of guilt and condemnation. On the other hand, we have the second man, the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hanging at his girdle strings are all the people of God. And everything that Jesus Christ did he did for the people of God and has made it possible, not only possible but made it certain that ultimately, all who hang from his girdle shall join him in heaven enjoying the forgiveness of sins, freedom from the law, and all of the other blessings that belong to God's redeemed. What a thrilling thing that is!

And the results of this freedom, Paul expatiates upon in verse 4 through 6 by pointing out that we have been married to someone who has been raised from the dead. Think of that, married to Jesus Christ. Marriage is the sphere of blessing. It's the relationship in which the wife surrenders herself to her husband saying I am his and receives also the confident assurance that her beloved is hers. What a beautiful relationship. How more beautifully could God ever express the union that exists between the believer and Jesus Christ than the relationship between a husband and a wife in the body of Christ? The wife gives and in giving she gets. There's a mutual possession. And also a mutual privilege to share in the love of one another, to share in the thoughts of one another, to share in the common purposes of life of one another, that relationship that is so close. Anyone who knows anything about a marriage relationship that approaches anything like that of the Bible knows about that which I am talking.

And then the normal result of just such a relationship is that there should be fruitfulness of family, progeny and so in the spiritual sphere. Incidentally, the Lord didn't look down and say, "Well, isn't it interesting? These people down on earth thought up marriage and that works pretty good with my purposes. I think I'll use it as an illustration of spiritual things." No, no! Who instituted marriage? It was the Lord God. Adam did not have a helpmeet. There was found no one corresponding to him. Who was the Father who brought the groom to the Bride? Why do we have such a ceremony like in this auditorium when a father and a bride and the father walks down the aisle with the bride on his arm as the one who gives away the bride? You realize what a significantly symbolic thing that is because it's the Lord God who brought Eve to Adam. And Adam took one look. He'd been looking at all those animals, naming tigers, wolves, giraffes, coyotes, etc. and the Lord brought this thing there and I said you know he took one look and he said, "Wow! Wow, boy this is it!" [Laughter] That's really the translation of that verse in Genesis. He said this last is "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh."

Well, it was God who brought the bride to the groom and just like the father comes down this aisle, he's playing the part of God taking the bride and giving the bride to the groom here. What a beautiful figure that is! Marriage is something God instituted in order to teach us spiritual things. We didn't think it up. He thought it up because it is so significant for his purposes. He planned it. He purposed it in ages past long before we ever came into existence.

And then we read that the church becomes of the bride of Christ. How can you even say something like that without speaking in the sense of awe? I am part of the bride of Christ brought by God through the ministry of efficacious grace, brought by God to be married to Jesus Christ. I want to say, "I will! I will!" Like I say to those young people who are standing in front of me so often, "Will thy have this woman to be thy wedded wife?" the husband says, "I will." "Will thy have this man to be thy wedded husband?"



"I will." I want to say, "I will to Jesus Christ." To be his bride what a magnificent relationship!

And then fruit. The Bible says without me you cannot do very much. No. Without me you can't do nothing. Every fruitful act that any believer ever performs is the work of God the Holy Spirit through Christ by virtue of our union with him. Every one of those acts if they're fruitful at all they come from God.

Now some of my friends often say well, Dr. Johnson you say we are free from the law, my goodness that means we can go out and live as we please. No. How foolish can you be! How stupid! If you just read the Bible the very next chapter after Paul has said we are released from the law he says through the union we have with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Spirit the "righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Romans chapter 8, verse 4. When you are joined to Jesus Christ and have the Holy Spirit within and are under him you are living under a higher standard of life. Not a lower standard of life. A higher standard of life for you're now related to the one who is the author of the Law of Moses. So we walk in newness of Spirit. That gives you just a little hint of what's to follow in Romans 8, newness of Spirit and not oldness of the letter.

So our relationship to the Lord Jesus is a wonderfully marital one. A life in love; his love to me, the communion, the intercourse that we share is the prerequisite for a life of happy joyous fruitfulness in the Christian life.

Now there is one feature that I have omitted for the end. We were Miss Worldling and we have become Mrs. Christian. We have been joined to Jesus Christ. Have you ever noticed as you thought about human life that there are three rings of relationship? There is the ring of acquaintance, friends or friendship, and there is marriage. A man may have a lot of acquaintances. In fact, I have so many acquaintances merely because I stand behind the pulpit so often that when I go out in Dallas a lot of people see me and say, "Hello, Dr. Johnson." I think where in the world have I seen them? And occasionally, it is simply that they may have been in an audience somewhere where I had been preaching, various other churches in the city, sometimes places around the United States, but lots of acquaintances. We all have lots of acquaintances, but you don't have a whole lot of responsibility to acquaintances. I usually don't say to acquaintances unless I'm feeling real bad, "Shut up! Don't bother me today." [Laughter] I've had to deal with somebody from Believers Chapel today. Incidentally, you'll have to treat preachers a little better now since that preacher somewhere in Texas the other day shot three of his members of his church because he was upset over them. [Laughter] We've had a lot more respect since then. [Laughter]

The second relationship is the relationship of friendship. Now that's something else because a person has fewer friends. He has few friends because friendship demands something on both sides. That is, a person must not only be a friend but be a friend in the sense that he is responsive to the relationship of friendship. And he expects that his friend shall say something for his name, shall be anxious for his welfare, shall stand up for him when he should have someone stand up for him, a person who will say a word for him, a person who will be anxious to guard his reputation just as you are anxious to guard theirs.

And then finally, there is the marriage relationship. That's the narrowest of all. There's just room for two. Just two and if one more person intrudes themselves, himself

or herself, into that relationship it's destructive of that relationship. In fact, we have one of the most offensive words in all of the English language to describe what happens when a third party intrudes themselves into that relationship, and that word is adultery.

Now I say to you my dear Christian friends that you have been married to Jesus Christ. If your love for the world is a challenge to your love for Jesus Christ you are in danger of committing spiritual adultery. If you worshipped idols in the Old Testament, that was called adultery; spiritual adultery. If your idol is your family, if your idol is your business, if your idol is materialism, whatever it may be that intrudes itself into this personal relationship with Jesus Christ you're a spiritual adulterer. Oh, may God deliver us from spiritual adultery. And realize that our relationship is to our groom to whom we have been betrothed in marriage forever by the Lord God himself. Is it not a singular thing that the Lord Jesus Christ came from heaven, that he betrothed himself to the human race forever by taking human nature to himself forever? Think of that! What it meant for the eternal second person of the Trinity to make a decision like that, to take human nature to himself forever in order to be married to such a wayward bride as we.

May God help us to respond. If you have here this morning and you never believed in Jesus Christ you're not married to him. You're still married to the old man. You're still hanging from the girdle of Adam the first. May God so speak to you that you sense your need of him, the need of forgiveness of sins, the need of justification, all provided in the death of the last Adam who shed his blood for sinners. May God cause you to flee to him, receive as a free gift everlasting life, and join the bride of Christ. May God the Holy Spirit bring it to pass.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for this wonderful relationship that we enjoy. We cannot express to Thee, Lord, the gratitude that we have and confess properly our often lack of appreciation of all that Thou hast done. O God, work mightily in our hearts that we might give ourselves completely to our Husband that he might be fruitful through us. May grace, mercy, and peace go with us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.