

The Love that Lasts.
The Joy that Lasts.
The Beauty that Lasts.

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An Address at a Marriage,
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The Love that Lasts. (EPHESIANS
V. 25.)

The Joy that Lasts. (JOHN II.
10.)

The Beauty that Lasts. (1 PETER
III. 3, 4.)

OUTLINE OF AN ADDRESS AT A
MARRIAGE MEETING.

BOTH Paul and Peter take up the subject of marriage. Paul takes it up on the heavenly line—Christ and the church. He has before him the man and the woman in the garden of Eden. The woman was deceived, but the man was not deceived; prompted by his love he went down and

THE LOVE THAT LASTS,

shared the shame and the ruin of the woman. But the first man, Adam, could not bring the woman up again, or even reinstate himself. But that is what Christ did as regards the church, His bride, when He went down to the place where she lay.

He was the Merchantman "seeking goodly pearls," and He found "one pearl of great price." "*One*"—that shewed the unity of the church, "*One pearl*" is the beauty of the church, and the "*great price*" indicated the value of the church. He went down to

THE BEAUTY THAT LASTS.

where she lay and brought her up and placed her by His side, to share all His glory as Man when He has worked out all the purposes of God. (Eph. i.)

Peter takes up marriage on the earthly line, on the line of *the kingdom*. John, in the sign—the significant miracle at the marriage of Cana of Galilee—seems to combine both. We get there the wine run out and the empty waterpots, representing the worn out and empty system of Judaism. Then death is rolled in ; the water pots are filled to the brim

THE LOVE THAT LASTS,

with water, and out of death comes the joy of the kingdom, the new wine, the joy that never runs out.

Now when we face the marriage condition we need to be practical. Peter's is the practical line, for he was a married man and perhaps had a family. We know that he had a mother-in-law, and no doubt when Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, his wife was greatly concerned, and Peter no doubt too passed through a great deal of exercise. Peter knew the experiences a man may go through in the marriage

condition, so he could speak feelingly about it.

Peter appeals to the wife first. The weaker vessel is appealed to first. That is invariably the case in Christianity—the wife before the husband, children before parents, servants before masters—because the point of attack of the enemy is always the point of least resistance. We know in the garden he came in through the woman, arrant coward that he was. He did not assail the man, he assailed the woman. If she had been in the good of headship she would have

THE LOVE THAT LASTS,

gone and told her head and relied in him. But she lost the sense in her soul that she was the weaker vessel.

Peter speaks of the wife as “the weaker vessel.” Weaker is the comparative of weak; so if the wife is the weaker vessel, the husband must be the weak vessel. Both are weak, so both are dependent on the grace of God, and thus Peter speaks of them as “heirs together of the grace of life.” So the husband is to give honour to the wife because she is the weaker vessel. He has to consider her, her indi-

viduality, her likes and dislikes. He should humour her, nourish and cherish her. The wife needs to be considered. She has a great deal to try her in the household.

How essential it is for the husband to consider the wife, and to remember that she is the weaker vessel; then their prayers will not be hindered. How sad it is when husband and wife cannot bow the knee together. The husband has got the hard part in this exercise, because he has to do the praying. Perhaps the wife says, You must be in a bad state of

THE LOVE THAT LASTS,

soul if you cannot pray with me. It is all very well for *her* to say that. She has only to get down on her knees, but he generally has to pray, and that is the harder part.

Peter shews how beautifully and beneficially a wife may influence her husband for good. We have plenty of instances in scripture that indicate how a wife may influence her husband for bad. The wife has a wonderful influence over her husband. There is a saying that if the husband is the head, the wife is the neck, and the neck turns the head, and there

THE BEAUTY THAT LASTS.

is a good deal of truth in it. Even an unconverted man may be won to God by the behaviour of his wife. The wife influences her husband more by what she is than by what she says.

The woman should be very careful of influencing her husband in regard to divine things, and specially as regards assembly matters. The wives of deacons are spoken of, because a deacon's wife may help him in his diaconal work, but nothing is said of the wives of the elders. The wife has nothing to do with the rule and ordering of the house of God.

THE LOVE THAT LASTS,

She should not influence her husband in these things.

But she has a proper sphere of influence, and can influence him for good. So the apostle speaks of the behaviour of wives. He shews that the beauty that wins her husband's affection and keeps it is not skin deep, and needs not to be augmented by what is outward. We know how many women seek to maintain their beauty by outward adorning. But what fosters and maintains the husband's affections is distinctly moral. It has been said that the true and abiding love be-

THE BEAUTY THAT LASTS.

tween husband and wife comes after marriage, and I am sure that this is right. It comes after the union. There is a bond made then that was not made throughout the courtship period. So Peter tells us of the beauty that lasts.

Paul takes up marriage on the love line, not the love which is simply natural, but the love which is spiritual, the *love* that lasts. I suppose that on the other side of death everything that is natural will be dropped. "They neither marry, nor are given in marriage." Paul speaks of the

THE LOVE THAT LASTS,

love which lasts. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

John speaks of *the joy that lasts*, the good wine of the kingdom. All other joy will die out, as the first wine did at the feast. But that which has God as its source lasts—*that* joy will never run out. The joy that we can trace up to God is the joy that is unfading.

Peter shews *the beauty that lasts*. And what is that? “The hidden man of the heart . . . which in the sight of

THE BEAUTY THAT LASTS.

God is of great price.” It is Christ. Surely “the hidden man of the heart” must be Christ—Christ formed therein, Christ characteristically coming out. It is that which gains and maintains the affections of the husband. Skin-deep beauty fades. The wrinkles and grey hairs must come. The form gets bent and weak, but the hidden man of the heart—that which in the sight of God is of great price—never loses its beauty. The unselfish love, the unwearied love that comes out in a true wife to her dear husband in a hundred and one

THE LOVE THAT LASTS.

little words and deeds never
loses its attractiveness—it is
the beauty that lasts.

S. J. B. C.

