

TO MARRY OR NOT TO MARRY

WE ARE ASKED to publish the below letter respecting marriage, in the hope that it may be helpful to some considering this subject:--

"DEAR SISTER: As your conduct towards me is not as formerly, but you pass me and seem to intentionally avoid giving me recognition, it has made me think that perhaps you may have some unfriendly feeling towards me on account of the stand I have taken, or on account of something that I may have said. If I have done you any wrong I ask your forgiveness.

"I can sympathize with you, as I also have a fight with the fallen flesh, and I will tell you how I feel and look at the matter of matrimony at this late moment of the harvest time, and how, by the Lord's grace, I obtain strength.

"This matter should be viewed by us only from the standpoint of the new mind, and by thus doing I find it the greatest help to keep the flesh from dictating to me along fleshly lines.

"We should also constantly have the *spiritual welfare* of ourselves as well as of others uppermost in our mind; and I thus ask myself: *How can I help a sister spiritually through the union of the flesh? How will it help the sister or myself in setting our affections on things above?* Is it the sister's fellowship I desire? If so, can I not have that without marriage? If not always personally, can I not have it through the course of letter writing, and thus help and encourage the sister spiritually, and develop character thereby?

"We are to crucify the tendencies of the fallen flesh, which are selfish desires, and put the body under and not give in to it, for now we are walking in newness of life, and know the brethren, not after the flesh, but after the spirit--'Ye are neither male nor female, but all one in Christ Jesus.' Let our love be a pure, holy, *brotherly* love.

"The 'Vow' I find a great help, especially the portion which reads, 'Thy will be done in my mortal body.' What is the Lord's will? What was this sexual distinction given for? I find it was for the filling of the earth, to populate it, and that after that has been accomplished the sexual distinction will cease.

"Realizing that there is no distinction of sex among the angels, and that such will also be the future condition of humanity, I ask myself, should I, at this closing moment of our pilgrimage, yield, or will I be more pleasing to the Lord if I now develop character in myself in the direction of our future condition, not only by setting my affections on things above and developing the new mind, but also by putting the desires of my fleshly body under?

"Although these fleshly bodies are to serve us while yet on this side the veil, they should not be used to serve us in sin and fallen tendencies.

"The Apostle said that we commit no sin if we marry, but this also includes our duty to perform the Father's will and make proper use of our functions, or abstain, and this cannot be done on account of the fallen and degraded flesh, as testified by those who have gone through this experience.

"The best way is to ask for strength and grace, and to be faithful to the admonition given us by St. Paul, which is, 'Let every man *abide* in the calling wherein he was called'; and by so doing we certainly will receive a blessing, perhaps a greater blessing than we think; it may win for us the crown, and the ignoring of it may prevent us from obtaining it and thus we may become members of the Great Company.

"A single person, when consecrating, agrees to give up more time to the Lord than can a married one. Realizing [R4959 : page 34] this, would it be right for me to take back some of the time which I have given to the Lord and give it to some one else? Would I be pleasing to the Lord by so doing?

"Do I know of an instance where a brother or sister has profited *spiritually* by the union? Perhaps a few, but as St. Paul said, 'He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord, but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.'

"The thought might suggest itself to me: Perhaps I might need just such experiences, just such troubles in the flesh to perfect me. To this I answer, If so, I will leave it in the hands of the Lord to give them to me, without trying to help Him by giving myself persecutions, for He knows best what I need, but will strive to please Him, remembering that 'Obedience is better than sacrifice.'

"We are told to make straight the path for our feet, and as the natural man can run better with the least burden, so also the spiritual man. Why should I cast extra stones and obstacles in my own way to hinder myself from running as I should?

"Viewing it from my personal standpoint, I ask myself, Would this union put two in the work? Or would it take out two, in the sense of preventing a sister or myself or both from entering now or in the future?

"Being tied down by obligations to those depending upon me, and not permitted to enter the colporteur work at present, I ask myself, Should I make my obligations heavier and also tie a sister down, preventing her from active service, now or in the future, and have her use her consecrated time in ministering to my fleshly body? 'Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.'

"Should the Lord see fit to make me foot-loose, then, viewing it from that standpoint, I should have to ask myself, Have I enough working capital for two, or can I earn enough in the work without the sister's assistance, should she become unable to help support herself? Or, should I become disabled, would she still remain in the work? Can we together make both ends meet, or might it take both of us out of the work and make it necessary for me to labor at something else, as has been the experience of others, so that I would thus miss the blessings and privileges, not only myself, but also be responsible for the sister?

"How do I know that we both will stand in this last moment of testing? I know of only one instance, where error has overtaken one of those thus united, where *the other* remained faithful unto the Lord, while the life companion fell; I find that in all other instances, to my knowledge, *they both fell*. Consequently, I do not think it advisable to take chances and endanger my Christian welfare or that of a sister. If there is a shadow of possibility that it might prevent me from [R4960 : page 34] making my 'calling and election sure,' I say to myself, through the grace and strength of the Lord, 'Don't do it.'

"We know that Satan is always ready to hand us plenty of excuses along these lines, and if we are looking for them he will be able to present one (even through a brother or sister) which we can accept.

"One brother expresses himself to the effect that we might seek advice upon certain matters and obtain the same from some who are not able to give advice to the Little Flock, as they may be or will be members of the Great Company.

"By scrutinizing every thought, and word, and action, I find that selfish thoughts should have no place in us, and if we do not give place to wrong thoughts they cannot result in wrong actions.

"The time is so short! It is not so much the years now, but we count the time by weeks and days; as we mentioned at the Mountain Lake Park Convention, it is only about one hundred and fifty weeks until the *last member* of the Little Flock shall have passed beyond the second veil, and some of this time has since passed.

"I pray the Lord to overrule these words, should they not be fully in accord with the new mind or His will.

"Pray for me, dear sister, that I may be a conqueror, yea, more than an overcomer.

"With much Christian love from your brother and fellow-runner in the narrow way, _____."

Notwithstanding the good arguments of this letter we are not to forget the other side of the question, which the Apostle sets forth. With each one rests the responsibility of his decision to marry or not to marry. To some the relationship must surely appear as above, but to others equally conscientious it may seem different. Let each one be fully persuaded in his own mind.

We certainly believe that those who cannot quite fully settle the matter and take a decided stand, determined not to marry, should very properly take the other decided stand and get married. Nothing is much more injurious to spirituality than indecision, wavering, lukewarmness. Do not trifle with your own earthly affections nor with the affections of others. Settle matters at once and firmly as you think would be most to the Lord's glory--most in harmony with the Divine will. Act upon this decision and put far from you everything to the contrary, so that you can give the best that you have to the Lord. A decision, a positiveness, will help in the development of character. Trifling undermines true character.

"Up, up, my soul, the long-spent time redeeming;
Sow thou the seeds of better deed and thought;
Light other lamps, while yet the light is beaming;
The time, the time is short."

THE PRAISE BELONGS TO HIM I know if I am chosen to joint-heirship with my Lord,
To reign with Him in glory, to receive that great reward;
If after all my weaknesses a crown for me He'll claim,
I know that choice will surely bring great glory to God's name.
If I had been more worthy, and my stumblings had been few,
When men gave *God* the glory, they'd have praised *my virtue*, too;
If I'd ne'er lost a battle, or had never missed the mark,
As they talked about *His* goodness, *mine*, also, they'd remark.
But my being so deficient, in thought and word and deed,
Means *He'll* get *all* the glory--He deserves it all, indeed.
When they see this weak mortal raised to such immortal heights,
What praise will rise to Him who in such nothingness delights!
I know that when my Savior did return to Heaven above,
And was crowned with wondrous glory, it did prove His Father's love;
But thinking of *Christ's* merit, and His sinless life of grace,
'Twas no wonder that Jehovah chose *Him* for such a place.
With *me* it is so different; I have not one thing to plead,
That I should be more honored than another bruised reed;
And truly there's no reason to give *me* a mite of praise;
To Him belongs all glory for the joys which crown my days.
If you knew all my failings, and my blemishes so vile,
And saw the loving patience my Father shows the while,
'Twould amaze you beyond measure to think He *could* or *would*

Make me an able servant who should do His people good.
But if to Him such praise is due because of what *I am*--
Because of such a weakling He has made a stronger man,
Then what will be His glory when He's raised me higher still,
And crowned me with His choicest on the top of Zion's Hill?
That all these years of striving find me so imperfect still,
Does not speak much to my credit nor give a happy thrill;
Where I *appear* as *worthy* 'tis because *His grace* is there,
And in the praise and glory I deserve no part, no share.
I hate my faults and failings, and I fight them day by day,
But from self with all its weaknesses I cannot get away;
Despite this fact, He uses me--*beyond is still more grace*--
And hosts will tell His glory--His who found poor me a place.

BENJAMIN H. BARTON.