

Ephesians 5:31: “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.”

ON THE OCCASION OF THE MARRIAGE OF BRENT D. ROPER AND SHIRLEY L. PHELPS (MEMBERS OF THE WESTBORO BAPTIST CHURCH) ON NOVEMBER 25, 1983.

Pastor Fred W. Phelps, Sr. gives the new husband and the new wife their charge.

And now I have to charge the new husband and the new wife. Because it is a church matter. It is preeminently a church matter. And, I have a thing or two to say. Although I don't have anything new to say. It's the things I've been saying to both of you for a lot of years now.

The fact of the matter, Shirley was born on a Wednesday, Brent; in case you didn't know, and the following Sunday she took her place in this Church. And ever since that time—ever since that first Sunday that she was alive in the world down to this—tonight--whenever the Church met she met. And, I'm talking about every time the Church met. And, I'm talking about every time the Church met since that first Sunday. And, that would be at least twice every Sunday. And, that scissors have never come upon her hair. Because she was persuaded by the Scriptures that a woman's long hair was a sign, or a symbol, that she was in subjection to her father until she left her father and mother and was joined to her husband. And, then, she was in subjection to her husband. And, I hope that scissors never come. And, I will be disappointed first, and not a little bit mad, if now that you have charge of her you change that. I don't think you will. [1 Corinthians 11:1-16].

That you conduct your affairs and guide your house and control your home. Like it says in 1st Timothy 3: Rule your house well. [1 Timothy 3:5]. These are old doctrines, I say, and I have to remind the Church of them at a time like this. And I have Bible for that. “And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.” [John 2:1-2]. That was an important marriage. And, I don’t even know who got married. But it was an important marriage, like this marriage is an important marriage. And, I am persuaded that the Lord God Almighty attends every marriage. Just like it says in Psalm 81 where it says that when human judges sit, God Almighty sits in their midst judging them. The Lord Jesus Christ is present at every marriage and requires—whether the participants know it or not—that it be conformable to the ancient pattern. We believe in the ancient pattern. We believe in the primitive Church. We believe that at the dawn of our race, in Genesis 1, when God said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have”—immediately shifted it from the singular to the plural—“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air”, and so forth. [Genesis 1:26]. Next Chapter, it says: “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone” [Genesis 2:18].

See I’ve got to give you a charge, Brent, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and I have to give you a charge, Shirley, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, I tell you on the authority of the Almighty, “that it is not good that the man should be alone.” [Genesis 2:18]. And, further, on the authority of the Almighty, out of Hebrews 13:4: “Marriage is honourable in all, and the [marriage] bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Marriage is honourable in all. In all times and in all places, including 1983. And, it is the only legitimate place for sex. That bed is undefiled. Marriage is honourable in all, and the

marriage bed undefiled. All the others are whoremongers and adulterers that God will judge.

Likewise, in the 2nd Chapter of Genesis it is written: “And the Lord God, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” [Genesis 2:18]. Meaning, all together proper for him. I’m persuaded that He doest that for His people. He leads his children. And, that he made this woman meet for you, proper for you. Furthermore, she’s called in the Scriptures the wife of your youth, and you’ll never have another. And, you’re not permitted to have carnally to do with any other woman. One man; one woman; one lifetime.

There was an old Baptist preacher in this country who wrote on September 15, 1840, on the subject. His name was Gilbert Beebe, and at that time he probably knew personally every Baptist Church in the United States. He published “The Signs of the Times”, a monthly paper, amongst the Baptists for about 50 years. He was born in 1800 and died about 1880 or 1881. And, one of his sons was the last Territorial Governor of Kansas. So, if there are not many primitive Baptists in Kansas nowadays, there was one when the territory became a state. Beebe was his name. And, he wrote in his paper on September 15, 1840, “The Law of Marriage”, a little article. “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth, and the husband is bound by the law to his wife as long as the wife liveth. And, that a bill of divorcement legally obtained may in the eye of our civil code disannul a former marriage contract so that, as far as the civil law is concerned, the parties may contract to live in adultery and their issue be legal. But the Bible gives them no such liberty, nor has the God of heaven given any authority to any earthly legislature to divide asunder what God has joined together.”

He got that out of Genesis Chapter 2: “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman,”-- **a woman, Brent**—“and brought her unto the man. And Adam said,

This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore"-- Mind you, I'm talking out of Genesis Chapter 2, while they both still dwelled in Eden and before the fall, before sin entered—"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." [Genesis 2:21-24].

And, in Genesis Chapter 3, the Lord God said unto the woman: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." [Genesis 3:16].

They put a hard question, they thought, to the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 19: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female". [Matthew 19:3-4]. To answer that question, our Lord Jesus Christ some 4,000 years after the Lord God established the institution of marriage, said "haven't you ever read that?", "haven't you ever read in Genesis 2?". Therefore-- "For this cause"—the Lord Jesus Christ is talking—"shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." [Matthew 19:5-8].

So this old Baptist preacher says, 143 years ago in this country, "We have ever refused to perform the marriage service in any such case where there was a living wife or a living husband. And, we should assume, connive directly at, or countenance the sin of adultery as to do so." I say, "Amen" to that. And every Baptist—every genuine follower of the Lord Jesus Christ who has

felt within his heart a desire to flee from the wrath to come—has said “Amen” to that. And, further, this old Baptist preacher--who was thoroughly familiar with probably 500 or so genuine Baptist churches in this country then, all of them less than 100 members, they called them Primitive or Old Baptists--and this preacher, editor of “Signs of the Times”, he knew them all, said “We hope never to hear of an instance among Old Baptists, nor can hold any to be an Old Baptist, who would thus live in adultery.” Gilbert Beebe says, “I don’t know of any Baptist church in the United States of America that would let anybody be a member who had more than one living wife or more than one living husband.” I’m telling you that this is ancient stuff I’m preaching to you, Brent.

Furthermore, in Malachi Chapter 2, the Lord God says that there is only one reason why a man puts away his wife, the wife of his youth. You only have one wife, you know? You are bound by the law to her until she dies, and she to you until you die. “[T]he 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. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. 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. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away” [Malachi 2:14-16]. There’s only one reason that a man ever puts the wife of his youth away, and that’s because of the hardness of his heart, Jesus said. Because he has somehow dealt treacherously against her, the word of the Lord speaking through Malachi said, at Malachi 2:14-16, that I just read to you.

You’ll either treat her too hard or you’ll treat her too soft. Or you’ll vacillate or you’ll fail somehow to rule your house well when the time ever comes when you find in your heart—some kind of bubbling, troublesome thought--that maybe you ought to put her away. I don’t think you will, because I’m persuaded since you came amongst us sometime ago now, and said to us—said to this Church—that you had a compelling, overriding desire to flee from

the wrath to come. And, you said to us, “Men and brethren, what must I do to be saved?” And, we layed no other restriction on you then, nor do we now, than “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” [Acts 16:31-32]. And, when you came later and asked to be baptized in water at the hands of this Church, we layed no other restriction on you then than that which the primitive Church layed on any candidate, to wit: “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” [Acts 8:37].

I hope that the Lord God in his providence will cause his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you, and lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. And, I hope that you will have the joy of the promise of Psalm 127: “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” [Psalm 127:3-5]. I love that promise and have for more than 32 years now. I recommend it to you.

Shirley, “the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.” [Ephesians 5:23]. “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” [1 Timothy 2:12-14]. Those are the only two reasons vouched safe to the sons of men, by a sovereign God, as to why the wife must obey the husband. Adam was first formed, and then Eve. That’s reason number one. There’s not a thing in the world you can do about that. And Adam was not deceived, but the women being deceived was in the transgression. That’s reason number two. You’re bound to be in subjection to Brent. “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing”. That’s the promise of 1 Timothy 2:15. “If they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands”. 1 Peter 3:1. “[T]hat, if any obey not the word”—you don’t think

he's going by the Bible like you think he ought to at this or that time or stage in your life—"[T]hat, if any obey not the word, they also may without [disputation and argument] be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." And, I tell you, Shirley, "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." [1 Peter 3:1-6]. You just don't know how in the world this thing is going to work out, if Brent Roper has his way about this or that matter that comes up. This is ancient doctrine. It began in the Garden of Eden. "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." [Genesis 3:16].

But Peter concludes that little passage of real good talk by reverting back to the husbands. So, I'll do that too. "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." [1 Peter 3:7]. It's a very wonderful adventure to travel through life together, and suffer together, and weep together, and rejoice together. And, above all, follow the Lord Jesus Christ together.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 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. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."

[Ephesians 5:25-29]. Our father Adam cried out upon first sight of our mother Eve: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh”. [Genesis 2:23]. Paul, alluding to that figure, called our Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam. Who was put into a deep sleep on the cross by a sovereign God, His Father. And while he slept, out of his side, he took a bride for his beloved son, called “The bride of the Lamb”. And I hope that you and Shirley--I hope are now and I believe you are and will be—a part of the Lamb’s wife. Without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

So, we begin in the beginning of our race, in Genesis 1, with this doctrine. And, that doctrine prevails and obtains in every age of mankind until the last age comes. And, it is written that our Lord Jesus Christ shall descend from heaven, in flaming fire, with all his holy angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel, and who shall be punished with everlasting perdition. When he shall come to be admired in his saints and to be glorified in them that trust him. [1 Thessalonians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10]. And, at that time, this whole doctrine of marriage will then come full circle. Starting in Genesis 1:1, brethren, and ending in Revelation 22. When there shall be a great shout athwart all the universe: The bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet him. And, behold the bride hath made herself ready. [Matthew 25:6; Revelation 19:7].

That’s my charge. Nothing new. I love you both. I’m immensely proud of you both.

Amen!