



A warning against mixed marriages

Adapted from a paper by Octavius Winslow, 1840

We especially recommend the careful reading of this article to any young Christian who may be tempted to form an intimate friendship with a non-Christian

There is a peculiar snare of the world to which the saints of God are exposed; and because many have fallen into it, and not a few have as a result greatly embittered their happiness, stained their profession and dishonoured God, we would briefly touch upon it with all tenderness and affection. We refer to marriages between the saints of God and the unregenerate world. The Word of God is against a union so unholy and so productive of evil as this. Not a precept authorises it, not an example encourages it, not a promise sanctions it, not a blessing hallows it! Indeed, so far is God from approving it, that he expressly forbids it. Thus, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18:

'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? and what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'

How strong the command, how conclusive the argument, and how persuasive and touching the appeal! Could it be more so? The command is — that a believer be not yoked with an unbeliever. The argument is — he is a temple of God. The appeal is — God will be a Father to such, and they are His children, who walk obediently to this command. There are many solemn considerations which seem to urge this precept upon the believer. A child of God is not his own. He does not belong to himself. *'Ye are not your own.'* His soul and body are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and therefore he is Christ's. He must not, he cannot, dispose of himself. He belongs to the Lord, and has no authority to give away either soul or body. O that this solemn fact could be written upon every believer's heart, *'Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.'* May the eternal Spirit now write it deeply and indelibly there!

But more than that, if this were not enough to urge the command upon a believer, his body is the *'temple of the living God'*! How solemn and weighty is this consideration! And shall he take *'the temple of God'* and unite it with one who is a stranger to His grace, to His love, to His Son? with one whose *'mind is enmity against God'* and whose heart beats not one throb of love to Jesus? God forbid! *'Know ye not'*, says James, *'that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?'*

Then for a believer to form with an unbeliever a union so close and so lasting as this, involving interests so important and so precious, is to enter into a league with an enemy of God. It is to covenant, and that for life, with a despiser of the Lord Jesus!

It does not lessen this breach of God's command that the Lord has frequently, in the exercise of His sovereign grace, made the believing party instrumental to the conversion of the unbelieving party. He can, and often does, bring good out of evil, order out of confusion, *'making the wrath of man to praise him'*, and causing events that were designed to oppose his purposes to be the very means of promoting them. But this is no encouragement to sin; and when the sin is committed, this

is but poor consolation. And to enter into a compact of the nature we are seeking to prevent with a conscience quieted and soothed with the thought that *'the wife may save the husband, or the husband may save the wife'*, is presumption of the highest kind, a presumption which God may punish with a disappointment as bitter as it is overwhelming. Let no dear child of God be enticed into an alliance so unholy, by a consideration so deceptive as this. Many have fallen into the snare, and have covered themselves with shame and confusion.

To the believer himself, forming a union so contrary to the express command of God's Word, the evils arising from it are many and grievous. To say nothing of the want of what must ever be considered essential to the mutual happiness of the union — oneness of mind, harmony of sentiment, congruity of spirit — there are lacking the higher elements of happiness — the mutual faith of each other in Christ, the communion of redeemed spirits, the holy fellowship of renewed minds, the unutterable sweetness of talking to Jesus by the way, and as *'heirs together of the grace of life'*, the joy of looking forward to the reunion of the glorified beyond the grave. It is, from the very nature of things, impossible that these elements of happiness should exist in the relation we are considering. The individuals thus united are inhabitants of different countries; one is an *'alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger and a foreigner'*, the other is a *'fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God'*; they speak different languages, are travelling opposite roads, and are journeying towards different countries. Surely we may ask what real union and communion can exist here.

But more than this. There are not merely negative but positive evils resulting from such a connection. The influences that are continually exerting their power are hostile to all growth in grace and to an upright and holy walk with God. The temptations to inconsistency of Christian conduct are many, perpetual and alarming. The constant influence of worldly conversation, worldly example and worldly pursuits weakens by slow but certain degrees the spiritual life of the soul, impairs the taste for (and lessens the enjoyment in) spiritual duties, unfits the mind for communion with God and opens the door for an almost endless train of departures. We do not claim that all these evils are realised; but we do say that the believer who so shapes his course is fearfully exposed to them: and that he has not been, or may not be, overcome of them is of the mere grace of God. The evils themselves are the necessary consequences of his departure from God's Word: and that he is preserved from the worst of them is only of the covenant mercies of that God, who, in the midst of all their temptations, is alone able to keep his people from falling.

For a child of God, then, to unite himself to one who can be of no assistance to him in his journey, but rather a hindrance — who, when he speaks of conflicts, cannot understand them; of burdens, cannot lighten them; of perplexities, cannot guide them; of trials, cannot share them; of sorrows, cannot soothe them; and of joys and hopes, cannot participate in them — is indeed to mark out for himself a lonely and desolate path, which may know no ending of its trial until it conducts him to the grave.

We would say, then, guard against this needless and unscriptural entanglement with the world. Marry *'only in the Lord'*. *'In all your ways acknowledge Him'*. Let his Word be your guide, his fear your rule, his glory your aim, and he will direct your paths through life, sustain you in death and conduct you safely to his heavenly kingdom.

Octavius Winslow

© 2015
www.christianstudylibrary.org