

Sermon on Psalm 103:1–13

Don O'Connor

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fuses to die? There is one way out. If he will not die, I can die, and if I die the marriage relationship is dissolved.

Verses 1 to 3 show that the husband should die, but in verse 4 we see that in fact it is the woman who dies. The Law does not pass away, but I pass away, and by death I am freed from the Law. Let us realize clearly that the Law can never pass away. God's righteous demands remain for ever, and if I live I must meet those demands; but if I die the Law has lost its claim, upon me. It cannot follow me beyond the grave.

What does Romans say? The law only has dominion over a man for as long as he lives. For you who have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, the law does not have dominion over you at all.

Col. 3:3 (KJV) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Col. 3:1-2 (KJV) If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. [2] Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Galatians 2:20 (KJV) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

The reality of these things is coming to you, if you allow. The law is in no hurry. Take your time. God is in no hurry, but he does love us.

Thus exactly the same principle operates in our deliverance from the Law as in our deliverance from sin. When I have died my old master, Sin, still continues to live, but his power over his slave extends as far as the grave and no further. He could ask me to do a hundred and one things when I was alive, but when I am dead he calls on me in vain. I am forever freed from his tyranny. So it is with regard to the Law. While the woman lives she is

bound to her husband, but with her death the marriage bond is dissolved and she is 'discharged from the law of her husband'. The Law may still make demands, but for me its power to enforce them is ended.

The Law does not pass away, but I pass away, and by death I am freed from the Law. Let us realize clearly that the Law can never pass away. God's righteous demands remain for ever, and if I live I must meet those demands; but if I die the Law has lost its claim, upon me.

Galatians 2:20 (KJV) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. But do you believe? You are dead. You are baptized. It is no longer you who live. She could never please her old husband. He was always just more demanding. If you did one thing, he'd demand two more. There is only one way out: God, when he died, he took us to the cross with him.

2 Cor. 12:9 (KJV) And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in (boast in) my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. If I'm going to boast, I'm going to boast in what my husband did.

Galatians 6:14 (KJV) But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. You can still act as if you're not crucified to the world, and that will work too. God is not in a hurry, he's good.

It cannot follow me beyond the grave. You've been buried in a watery grave, taken into the cross, into his very wounds, into the resurrection.

Thus exactly the same principle operates in our deliverance from the Law as in our deliverance from sin. When I have died my old master, Sin, still continues to live, but his power over his slave extends as far as the grave and no further. He could ask me to do a hundred and one things when I was alive, but when I am dead he calls on me in vain. I am for ever freed from his tyranny. So it is with regard to the Law. While the woman lives she is bound to her husband, but with her death the marriage bond is dissolved and she is 'discharged from the law of her husband'. The Law may still make demands, but for me its power to enforce them is ended.

When the law says do this, you are to immediately refuse. How are you doing with the First Commandment to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and your neighbor as yourself? Is this the law? Yes. When the law comes to accuse you, you can say to him, “You’ll have to take that up with my Husband.” It’s like a bill collector, collecting the wages of sin for not keeping the law. My husband is not poor and he can pay any bill there is, and he does.

Now the vital question arises: ‘How do I die?’ And the preciousness of our Lord’s work comes in just here: ‘Ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ’ (Rom. 7. 4). When Christ died His body was broken, and since God placed me in Him (1 Cor. 1. 30), I have been broken too. When He was crucified, I was crucified with Him. In the sight of God, His death included mine. On the hill of Calvary it was for ever done.

‘Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law.’ That woman’s husband may be very well and strong, but if she dies, he may make as many demands upon her as he likes; it will not affect her in the slightest.

When the law tells you to do something, you are forbidden to do it by yourself. This includes loving your neighbor. If you strive under the law by yourself, the thing is never finished. But believe it is already finished. If we could keep the law, it would only be a defense against the gift of the Gospel.

Death has released her from all his claims. The all-inclusive death of Jesus Christ has for ever freed us from the Law.

But that is not all. Remember, our Lord did not remain in the grave. On the third day He rose again; and since we are still in Him we too are risen. The body of the Lord Jesus speaks not only of His death but of His resurrection, for His resurrection was a bodily resurrection. Thus ‘through the body of Christ’ we are not only ‘dead to the law’ but alive unto God.

God’s purpose in uniting us to Christ was not merely negative; it was gloriously positive —‘that ye should be joined to another’ (Rom. 7.4). Death has dissolved the old marriage relationship, so that the woman, driven to despair by the constant demands of her former husband, who never lifted a little finger to help her carry them out, is now set free to marry the other Man, who with every demand He makes becomes in her the power for its fulfillment.

This is why we don’t do anything by ourselves anymore, because our striving would be losing.

And what is the issue of this new union? 'That we might bring forth fruit unto God' (Rom. 7. 4). By the body of Christ, that foolish, sinful woman has died, but being united to Him in death she is united to Him also in resurrection, and in power of that resurrection, hers becomes a fruitful life.

Because Christ lives, and because we live and move and have our being in Him, fruit is inevitable. If you're still refusing to be dead every day, refusing to be baptized every day, there is no fruit. Works done before justification are evil works, always done with the wrong motive - to justify ourselves. But, it will always appear good. Look at the many wonderful moral deeds people do, but for what motive?

By the body of Christ, that foolish, sinful woman has died, but being united to Him in death she is united to Him also in resurrection, and in power of that resurrection, hers becomes a fruitful life. The life of the risen Lord within her empowers her for all the claims God's holiness makes upon her. The Law of God is not annulled; it is perfectly fulfilled, for the risen Lord Jesus now lives out His life in her, and His life is always well-pleasing to the Father.

What is the most obvious thing that happens when a woman marries? She changes her name. She no longer bears her own name but that of her husband; and she shares not his name only but his possessions also. Everything that belongs to him belongs now equally to her.

Every good name that has been attributed to Christ is now yours. It will take eternity to be grasped by it all. I'll say you're Mrs. Jesus, and all the names the Father attributed to Him are now yours as his Bride.

The life of the risen Lord within her empowers her for all the claims God's holiness makes upon her. The Law of God is not annulled; it is perfectly fulfilled, for the risen Lord Jesus now lives out His life in her, and His life is always well-pleasing to the Father.

If you ever get the sinners out of the church, we've had it. We have all these little evaluations of how people should be, or how they should act. Let them all go. Okay, do what you'd like. What would you like to do? I trust the Lord. If you said you really wanted to dye your hair purple, okay, I might react a little, but it would be alright.

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What is the most obvious thing that happens when a woman marries? She changes her name. She no longer bears her own name but that of her husband; and she shares not his name only but his possessions also

This might challenge your faith a little. Where's your Cadillac? His possessions are so great, you don't need a Cadillac. "My image needed a Cadillac," you used to think. I'm not saying you won't get one, but that is no longer the emphasis. You can go either way: "You're into prosperity. You're into poverty. You find righteousness in doing without." You can judge people on either side of the aisle. No more of that comparing; it is unwise. You're all of Christ. One of The Means of Grace is the mutual conversation of the saints - the word proclaimed through your brothers and sisters; not those who are brilliant, but the weak, foolish ones. You can judge what I'm saying, and that's okay. God has placed members here where he wants, and everybody has a gift. Read Thesis 28 and you'll know who you should love. Read further and you'll realize that Christ, your Husband, does love them already. Will you write Him off when He shows up in the least, the weakest? You'll miss out on a lot of grace.

Jim Durkin said that spiritual warfare is reflected in the fact that most people are taken up with their problems. They don't have time for anyone else, and they've made it that way. What might deliver you is looking out, beyond your flesh and blood. If they are all you hear from, they're all in agreement with you because you've managed them. Love not the world. We love sinners, but I don't fellowship with certain people. They call and I say, "What do you want?" And they don't tell me. We have no fellowship with that. If they're hating Jesus, inasmuch as they hate the brethren, we are commanded not to have fellowship with them. Do I love them? Yes. But I don't break bread with them. You don't have to get worked up about this. It's a minor thing. "Well, I have an opinion on that." Well, you're free to have an opinion, even ten opinions.

The Lord marries a 482 lb woman, with green teeth, and she's bald. She has a lot of problems because she has been heavy for so long - this is the flesh. How long does he wait to love her? It is amazing when you read the Book of Hosea. God tells him to marry a harlot. It is a very deep book. I think it is perhaps one of the top three deepest books in the bible, and it prefigures Christ. Spiritual idolatry, is adultery.

What is the most obvious thing that happens when a woman marries? She changes her name. She no longer bears her own name but that of her husband; and she shares not his name only but his possessions also

Everything that is hers becomes his. All of her sin, and a million manifestations of it, are his. If the Bride refuses to give him her sins, refuses to confess, he still loves her to be sure, but she is missing out on something great - her husband. She has all kinds of abstractions under the name J-E-S-U-S. Do you know your husband? Do you speak of him continuously and of what he has done? What is your mouth going to be occupied with? We fellowship over Christ. You can try to substitute fellowship with casual acquaintances, or busy-ness, or having many pursuits, but they won't fill the void; although you can kid yourself for another 10 years. Only He, the sweet voice of Jesus, brings peace into our hearts.

Everything that belongs to him is hers, and everything that belongs to her is his. This is called the exchange - the scandalous exchange, the great exchange. It is offensive. That makes me like a beggar. I bring nothing and he brings everything. I do bring my sin.

Everything that belongs to him belongs now equally to her. All of a sudden she is amazingly enriched. And so it is when we are joined to Christ. So it is when we are joined to Christ - married.

You're not mad at your husband today, are you? You could be because he won't do what you want. Some people don't outwardly admit that they are angry with God. They have a pious facade they put on. Job's wife had a good word, on one level. At least she knew where the problem was. "Curse God and die." You can see why Job's wife is in the world, like the rest of the foolish women. They have no concept of what's going on; only that tragic things happen.

But here, the Bride now has everything that he has. She is amazingly rich because everything that he has is hers. Christ has fulfilled the law on our behalf. It means from henceforth I will do nothing for God. What an awful heresy. If I try to please God in the flesh, I put myself back under the law. It is Christ that now fulfils the law. God works in you to do his will.

It is God which worketh in you. Deliverance from law does not mean that we are free from doing the will of God. It certainly does not mean that we are going to be lawless. Very much the reverse! What it does mean however is that we are free from doing that will as of ourselves. Being fully persuaded that we cannot do it, we cease trying to please God from the ground of the old man. Having at last reached the point of utter despair in ourselves so that we cease even to try, we put our trust in the Lord to manifest His resurrection life in us.

We are married to one who loves us as we are. He loves foolish, ignorant, sinful people. He delivers us from our religiousness, our efforts, and our works - our flesh works. He expects

fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Joy is a byproduct of believing and trusting in our Husband.

What was your first husband? Who were you married to? You joined yourself to the reason of the age; reasonings, arguments. There are a million manifestations of reason. The Theologian of Glory uses reason to save his life. But if you lose your life, if you're baptized in Christ, there you'll find your husband. But if you're looking inside of yourself, where does that end? We are naturally hard-wired for law. Looking inside ourselves will turn into law, separation, anger, blame, ultimate despair, good works, and judgment. Why isn't someone in this church doing "what they should" or "what I want?" If we look to ourselves we are not looking to our Husband. But the law does fulfill God's promise. The right use of the law will lead us to Christ where we realize that all of our works don't give us a leg to stand on. Where do you go? I go to Christ. Where is he at? In the fellowship of the sinners in the church, not the pious. Here, Christ speaks to us face to face. You don't have to be afraid if you're a sinner. The only reason you'd bow your head when I say this is because of shame, the shame of trying to make people pious.

Where do you put your trust; in baptism, in communion, in confession, and in the mutual conversation of believers? If this only goes as far as your household, beware because they'll only agree with you. It shouldn't be this way, but... If you had a son, would you chasten him? God says not to despise that chastening. He who hates reproof will die. But, Christ has died for you. Christ is in that reproof. He reproves us for our good. When I start turning inward and I fall down, he allows that because he wants me to turn to him.

John 5:25 (KJV) Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

The voice of your husband, the voice of prophesy, the Word of God. The dead will hear it.
John 18:37 (KJV)

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Are you hearing the words of your husband? If not, then your faith falls. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Anyone can get tricked. With Christians, this is normal life. Paul got wretched, and then he went on to the good news of his husband in Romans 8. Go to the gospel. The gospel is the

voice that drowns out all other voices. The gospel is the voice - the voice of the Lord saying Come away my Beloved. Come away from trying to do things under the law, your old husband who is dead.

Rev. 22:17 (KJV) And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Who do they say to come to? Come to me, your husband.

Psalms 29:1-5 (KJV) A Psalm of David.

Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. [2] Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. [3] The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters. [4] The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. [5] The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

The voice of the Lord breaketh the proud. What are the waters? Humanity. The Church is the waters. The waters that flow out from the throne.

Psalms 29:5-8 (KJV) The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. [6] He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. [7] The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. [8] The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness - the dry barren land where no water is.

Even birth comes from the voice of the Lord. Psalms 29:9-11 (KJV) The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. [10] The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. [11] The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

His glory is the gospel of Jesus, his son. Everyone speaks of that. You got any floods? He sits on them.

Psalms 29:11 (KJV) The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

Shalom. The Voice of the Lord.

Rev. 22:1-2 (KJV) And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. [2] In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. This speaks of the restoration of Paradise, where Adam is banished from.

Rev. 22:3 (KJV) And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

Rev. 22:3 (KJV) And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

The Word of God flows out of the threshold of the temple. It starts as a little stream.

Psalms 103:1-2 (KJV) A Psalm of David. Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. [2] Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

How many forgot his benefits last week? You just start focusing on what you don't have. People are so taken up with their problems (basically, themselves) that they don't have any time, and forget about their neighbors. Some of them are weak. They're there not for us to rule over. Some use weakness, however, to rule over the strong. But they are there to fellowship with and to love. There is a diversity of gifts and a diversity of people.

Psalms 103:3 (KJV) Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

The Syro-Phoenician woman; what healed her daughter? The Word, the crumbs. Has your heart been healed? If it's not, you can't hear, and if you can't hear you can't believe. You'll look at this through law, instead of seeing that Christ has fulfilled all the law. When Scripture seemingly makes demands through the law, you'll have to hide it, or put on a pious facade, or you'll go into despair. "I can't do this. It's too hard." This will happen to you if you don't believe that Christ has fulfilled every law, and imputed that to you.

Psalms 103:4 (KJV) Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

He marries you. He enters a covenant with you, the same as with our Father Abraham. God reckoned him as righteous, not because he did everything right, but because he trusted God. His faith was tried. Some people's faith is tried much more than mine.

Psalm 103:5 (KJV) Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Psalm 103:6-8 (KJV) The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. [7] He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. [8] The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

He's heavily weighted on the mercy end of things.

Psalm 103:12 (KJV) As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Are you sure, wife, you don't want to keep your transgressions? Do you want to hide them? "I haven't been that bad, have you?"

Psalm 103:12 (KJV) As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Elijah and John the Baptized preached law. The law is actually a friend of the Bridegroom, not an enemy. If you're married to it, however, it demands a lot. The friend of the Bridegroom keeps out wedding crashers; those who are secure in their sin. "What are you doing here? Who warned you of the wrath to come?" The law keeps you safe. In that sense, it becomes a friend and it protects you, but it doesn't make a good husband. Good thing you died to the law.

John 3:26-29 (KJV) And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. [27] John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. [28] Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. [29] He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

Psalm 103:4-5 (KJV) Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; [5] Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

I'm contrasting law and gospel:

Hebrews 12:18-24 (KJV) For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, [19] And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: [20] (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: [21] And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) [22] But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, [23] To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, [24] And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

The old covenant was the law. You've come to a new covenant. You haven't come to Hagar, but to Jerusalem - Sarah. Therefore, Sing O Barren, for you'll have more children, more fruit, than she that is married, because your husband is greater than some of the legalistic things, like legalistic husbands, that are in this world. Some look good outwardly, but you've come to your Husband, to Christ.

Hebrews 7:25 (KJV) Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

He lives to intercede for you. The intercession is the blood also, that is between you and the law.

Psalms 63:7 (KJV) Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

In the shadow of his mercy seat, in the shadow of the blood that was poured on the mercy seat, in that is our comfort; Christ, our Husband.

How to Live a Christian Life, by Martin Luther

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A third characteristic of faith is that it unites the soul of the Christian to Christ.

What's another name for unity, united, joined in a covenant? It means an altar, for victims.

We know what to do with victims here. Tie them down.

Everything he has is hers, but everything she has on the negative side of life, is his. "I can't hear you until I go on a diet because I weight 482 lbs." He marries us, 482 lbs. and all. We have sins weighing us down, but you can pretend all you want. It's allowed, but it's no fun. He brings us to confession, by his grace and mercy. We confess to the one who ever lives to make intercession. This is who lives in you. Will you throw your intercessor into prison?

In a similar fashion to the union of husband and wife (which is 'mysterious' in the words of the Apostle Paul, so too does the soul of the Christian and Christ become one flesh.

What is this implying? A marriage. Now, as Adam said, you're bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. The Scripture says this about you. Once he breathes life into the dead bones, they have eternal life.

If the soul of the Christian and Christ are one flesh, and a true marriage exists between them (realize that we are thinking of the most perfect of all marriages— human marriages are but poor examples of this one great marriage!), whatever each possesses becomes the common property of both. Both good things as well as bad things!

How many know that you might possess a few hang-ups or a few things you might need deliverance from, from time to time?

This means that whatever belongs to Christ becomes the possession of the Christian soul and it can boast about it as if it were his own! Whatever is the possession of the Christian soul Christ takes to be His own.

Christ doesn't have bad things, so whose bad things are these? He starts owning these things. Will you let him? He has no hope in you being able to do anything.

This means that whatever belongs to Christ becomes the possession of the Christian soul and it can boast about it as if it were his own! Whatever is the possession of the Christian soul Christ takes to be His own.

We don't have time in this life to say what belongs to Christ. The internet couldn't contain it, and he owns that too.

Whatever is the possession of the Christian soul Christ takes to be His own.

Have you ever taken a look at your soul? Don't worry about it. It all belongs to Christ now, now that you're joined to him.

In comparison then, it is obvious that the Christian soul, through this marriage, has experienced an incalculable gain of possessions. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sin, death and condemnation.

Through faith, sin, death and hell become possessions of Christ. Through faith grace, life and salvation become possessions of the soul. Being the Husband, Christ must take responsibility for what belongs to the wife.

You got anything you're toting around; offences, fears, accusations? They're all his.

At the same time, He gives to the wife what is His. If He gives His wife His own body and Himself, how can Christ not give her all that He possesses?

Romans 8:32 (KJV) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

If He takes to Himself the body of His wife, how can Christ not also take to Himself all that is hers as well? In this marriage of the soul of the Christian to Christ a delightful vision is given to us. It is a vision not only of communion, but of successful warfare, victory, salvation and redemption. Christ is God and man. Christ is the Person who has not sinned, will not die, and will not be condemned. Indeed Christ cannot sin, die or be condemned. The righteousness, life and salvation Christ possesses are invincible, eternal and almighty.

When I say that Christ is a Person who through the wedding ring of faith becomes a part of the sin, death and hell of His wife—no, even better, He makes them His possession—what I mean is that Christ deals with them in no other way than if they actually were His and He Himself had sinned. When Christ suffered, died, and descended into hell, He did so to overcome all things. Sin, death, and hell could not swallow Christ up. In a stupendous conflict, Christ swallowed up sin, death and hell. After all, Christ's righteousness rises above the sins of every man. Christ's life is more powerful than death. Christ's salvation is unconquerable by hell.

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will not be condemned. Indeed Christ cannot sin, die or be condemned. The righteousness, life and salvation Christ possesses are invincible, eternal and almighty.

Obviously then, the believing soul, through faith in Christ, becomes free of all sin, unafraid of death, and safe from hell. The soul is also given the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation which belong to its Husband Christ. In this way Christ presents to Himself a glorious bride, without spot or wrinkle, cleansing her with the washing of water with the Word,⁴ that is, by faith in the word of life, righteousness, and salvation. In such a way Christ initiates the engagement of the Christian soul to Himself "in faithfulness, in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and mercy" (Hosea 2:19,20).

Who can estimate the true value of this royal wedding? Who can even comprehend the worth of the glory of this grace? Christ, the rich and pious Husband, marries a poor and impious prostitute. In doing so, Christ rescues her from all her evil and gives to her all His good things.

This having been done, it is now impossible that she will be destroyed for her sins. Her sins have become the possession of Christ and assumed by Him. Having in her husband, Christ, a righteousness which now she can claim as her own and can erect opposite all her sins, death and hell, she can claim: "Even if I have sinned, my husband, Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned. Everything that belongs to me has become His possession. All His possessions have become mine." So we read: "My beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16); and Paul writes: "But thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). This Victory' about which Paul writes is a victory over sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:57).

It should be obvious why so much importance is attributed to faith. Faith alone can fulfill the law and justify with works. The First Commandment⁵, "You shall have no other Gods," is fulfilled alone by faith. If you were nothing but good works from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head you would not be worshiping God, nor fulfilling the First Commandment. It is impossible to worship God without attributing to Him the glory of truth and universal goodness.

All that is his is yours, and all that is yours is his. This is the great, scandalous exchange. What do you want to hold back from him? What do you want to hide from him? Have you been charging on his credit card and he didn't know? Are you a wife that has other plans? It wouldn't matter. Faith comes by hearing the voice, the voice of Christ, beginning with Moses

and all the prophets, right through Revelation. His mercy, his marriage endures forever. He will never leave you or forsake you.

Father we thank you for the unfathomable riches in your Son. We thank you for the voice of the Word of God, the voice in the church that washes us. We thank you for the brothers and sisters, who you've given us, both strong and weak; it doesn't matter. They are yours.

Father, once again, we listen. Cause us once again this week to listen to those words that fall from the cross: Father, forgive them. All of your sins, I pronounce to you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, all your sins are forgiven for Christ's sake.

AMEN