

## Love Like a Puritan (ABF, 5/2/21)<sup>1</sup>

### I. Is That Title Right?

- a. Merriam-Webster on “puritan”: “a person who follows strict moral rules and who believes that pleasure is wrong.”<sup>2</sup>
- b. Why would we want to love like a Puritan if Puritans believe pleasure to be wrong?
- c. Recall WSC 1: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to *enjoy* him forever.”
- d. According to J.I. Packer, the Puritans availed themselves of the whole Bible for its teaching on marital love (414):
  - i. Genesis: Institution of marriage
  - ii. Ephesians: Full meaning of marriage
  - iii. Leviticus: Marital hygiene
  - iv. Proverbs: Marital management
  - v. NT books: Marital ethic
  - vi. Esther, Ruth, Song of Songs: Illustrations and exhibitions of marital ideal.

### II. Marital Love Must Be Spiritual

- a. The tightest bond between husband and wife is the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace formed through the redemptive work of the Son (Eph. 2; 4:3).
- b. Beeke: “[Love] must be built with Christ as the foundation and cemented with mutual use of the means of grace” (415).
  - i. **Q:** How can spouses mutually use the means of grace to love one another?
  - ii. Richard Baxter (1615-1691): Stir up each other to love, faith, & obedience by warnings and help with another’s sins and struggles, joining in worship, preparing one another for death, and comforting each other with the hope of eternal life (416).
- c. Sinking foundations: Physical beauty, abilities, talents, gifts, etc.
  - i. Secker: “If a woman’s flesh has more of beauty than her spirit has of Christianity, it is like poison in sweetmeats, most dangerous” (418).
  - ii. Secker: “Take heed, for sometimes the bag and baggage go together” (418).
  - iii. **Q:** What are some other shaky foundations?
- d. Love must be Spiritual because of love’s grounding. Christ loves the Church
  - i. Absolutely (Eph. 5:25)
  - ii. Purposefully (Eph. 5:26)
  - iii. Realistically (Eph. 5:27); and
  - iv. Sacrificially (Eph. 5:28-29)
- e. Richard Greenham’s Charge to Groom (1542-1594): “...I charge you in the sight of God and his angels, and as you will answer unto me and the parents of this my sister, before the judgment seat of Christ, that as you receive her a virgin from her parents, so you neglect no duty whereby her salvation may be furthered, that you may present her pure

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<sup>1</sup> This lesson is essentially a summary of Chapter 23, “Puritans on Marital Love,” in Joel Beeke’s book, *Puritan Reformed Theology: Historical, Experiential, and Practical Studies for the Whole of Life* (Reformation Heritage Books, Michigan). Page numbers in parentheses, therefore, refer to this book. For more on the Puritan view of sex and marriage, see Leland Ryken’s book, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were*, ch. 3. For an exposition on love in an earlier ABF lesson, see my lesson on 1 Corinthians 13 (3/28/21): [1 Corinthians 13 | SermonAudio](#).

<sup>2</sup> This is one of the entries: [Puritan | Definition of Puritan by Merriam-Webster \(merriam-webster.com\)](#)

and blameless, as much as in you lies, unto Jesus Christ when He shall call you to account” (416).

### III. Marital Love Must Be Superlative

- a. Are husband and wife persuaded that each is the best for the other?
- b. Would a godly parent seek to trade his child for another?
  - i. What if the prospective child were more athletic, intelligent, gifted, respectful, or godly than one’s own?
- c. Would a godly spouse seek to trade his other half for another?
  - i. What if the prospective spouse were more attractive, intelligent, gifted, understanding, or godly?
- d. The dog is not a man’s best friend.
  - i. Thomas Gataker (1574-1654): Adam was *truly* happy in Eden, but he was not *fully* happy until God made him Eve (Gen. 2:23).
  - ii. “There is no society more near, more entire, more needful, more kindly, more delightful, more comfortable, more constant, more continual, than the society of man and wife” (418).
- e. Poetic love from Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672)

If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man was lov’d by wife, then thee....  
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,  
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,  
Nor ought but love from thee, give recompense (419).
- f. **Q:** How can we arrive at such love?
  - i. Guard spouse’s honor and reputation-Don’t complain or grumble.
    1. As a general rule, husbands, may you and God alone know your wives’ faults.
    2. As a general rule, wives, keep your husbands’ sins and struggles to yourselves.
    3. If the spouse’s sins threaten the peace and purity of the church, then certainly others must be involved.
    4. George Swinnock (1627-1673): “To procure a quiet life, the husband must be deaf, and the wife blind” (420).
- g. It must be the husband’s aim to please his wife, and the wife’s to please her husband (1 Cor. 7:33-34).

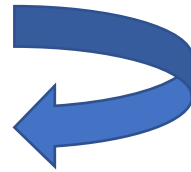
### IV. Marital Love Must Be Sexual<sup>3</sup>

- a. If we want our marriages to thrive, we must invest all that we are in our spouses.
- b. The Reformers and Puritans eschewed Roman Catholic misunderstandings:
  - i. Celibacy is to be preferred to marriage.
  - ii. Physical intimacy is to be for procreative purposes alone.
  - iii. Any procreative act involves sinful passions but is a necessary evil.
- c. Sex within marriage is a gift.

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<sup>3</sup> More on intimacy in the next two weeks.

- d. William Perkins (Father of Puritanism, 1558-1602): “They do err who hold that the secret coming together of man and wife cannot be without sin unless it be done for the procreation of children” (422).
- e. Perkins: Marital sex is a “due debt/benevolence,” that married spouses owe to their spouses (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3).
  - i. This is typically a debt cheerfully paid.
- f. This debt is to be paid in three ways, according to Perkins (422):
  - i. By the right and lawful use of their bodies or of the marriage bed (cf. Heb. 13:4).
  - ii. By cherishing one another intimately rather than mechanically (Eph. 5:29).
  - iii. By being intimate with one another in a holy rejoicing and “solacing themselves each with the other in a mutual declaration of the signs and tokens of love and kindness [e.g., kissing] (Prov. 5:18-19; Song 1:2; Gen. 26:8; Isa. 62:5).”
- g. **Q:** How do we cultivate this joy and intimacy?



*Looking Ahead*

- 5/9 Cultivating Joy & Intimacy, Part 1
- 5/16 Cultivating Joy & Intimacy, Part 2
- 5/23 Handling Marital Conflict, Part 1
- 5/30 Handling Marital Conflict, Part 2