

“And He Loved Her”

Meditations on Marriage
from the
“Christian Shepherd”

—2006—

January/February 2006

“*But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac*” (Gen. 24:4).

Genesis 24 is sometimes referred to as ‘the great love story of the Bible’. While understanding what is usually meant by this, we must say that truly, the *greatest* love story in the Word of God is recorded in the four Gospels. John 15:13 and Romans 5:8 give two precious summaries of the greatest of all stories of love: “*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*” and “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*”.

The account of Isaac gaining his bride is, however, full of very precious and morally practical principles for married couples. Lord willing, we plan to spend the next few issues meditating on the instructions found in this delightful portion of God’s Word. While considering the practical applications of this account to marriage, let’s not forget that it presents a beautiful picture of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ and His beloved bride—the church—led by the Spirit of God across the wilderness of this *present evil world* to the Father’s House. There He who “*loved the church and gave Himself for it*” at present eagerly waits that moment when He will come in the clouds to catch away the church. Then He will *see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied*.

Seven Important Aspects

Seven people or groups are specially brought before us. (1) Abraham the father, (2) Isaac the son, (3) Abraham’s servant and his men, (4) The *daughters of men* who drew water, (5) Rebekah the prospective bride, (6) Rebekah’s family—specially her brother Laban—her mother and father, and (7) Rebekah’s nurse. Each of these have special significance in providing helpful principles for entering into, enjoying and maintaining a truly happy Christian marriage. We will consider these people and groups as providing 7 practical principles for marriage

A Father’s Faith, Desire, and Command

Abraham’s faith in God is beautifully displayed by the instructions he gives his servant. Above all, a wife for his beloved son, Isaac, was not to come from the world through which he passed, a pilgrim and stranger. Having a “*father’s heart*”, Abraham would not willingly allow the godless spirit of the world in which he lived to capture the heart of his beloved son, Isaac.

The first of the seven mentioned in Gen. 24 that we will consider in gleaning principles for maintaining a happy Christian marriage is the *father*. Abraham loved his son (Isaac) and desired him to have a happy, fruitful marriage. But he also knew that only in walking with God by faith, could this happen. How our Father desires that Christian

marriages abound in fruitfulness and joy while providing a positive example for others.

Power and Persuasion

Abraham must surely have sorrowed deeply when he learned that Hagar had taken a wife from Egypt (the land of her nativity) for their son, Ishmael. Though she had daily seen Abraham’s faith and walk with God, her heart was still attached to Egypt and its godless ways. In picking a wife from Egypt for Ishmael, she knowingly attached his heart to that world as well. Nothing in nature’s realm has more power to move and mold the affections and desires of the heart of a spouse than a husband or a wife.

No Compromise

Abraham—the *friend of God*—had no intention of allowing the world he had separated from to claim his beloved Isaac’s heart through an unwise marriage union. Earlier (see Genesis 14) he refused the world’s offer of “*a thread* (being *characterized* by the world) *even to a shoelatchet* (*walking* like the world)” because he had already received something so much better from Melchizedek, God’s priest—bread (*life and satisfaction*), wine (*joy*), and the *blessing* of God.

Knowing that marriage with one whose heart would not separate from the world would attach Isaac’s heart to it, causing him an incalculable loss of God’s *true riches* (Luke 16:11), Abraham gives his servant resolute, unwavering instructions which can be characterized by two words—*no compromise*.

True Love and True Separation

A Christian husband and wife who truly love the Lord and each other—who really desire the best blessing and joy for each other, will never use love as a *lever* to force a compromise in heart separation from Christ to the world. Lot’s wife *looked behind* and became a *pillar of salt*. Aquila’s wife, Priscilla, was *one* with her husband in the things of the Lord. What togetherness, service and love shine in their lives—what blessing they were to others!

March 2006

“*And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell*” (Gen. 24:4).

A Son

The second of the seven persons mentioned in Gen. 24 from whom we desire to glean principles for stable, happy marriages is Abraham’s “*only [son], whom thou lovest, Isaac*” (Gen. 22:2, JND Trans.).

It is very precious to notice that this verse contains the *first* mention of “love” in the Word of God. What love exists between Father and Son, pictured in

Abraham's love for Isaac. Such love desires the best for its object—that which satisfies and blesses.

Our blessed God has done that for His beloved Son in providing a bride for Him (at infinite cost to our Lord Jesus)—see Eph. 5, specially vv. 25-32. He too has instituted the marriage union (Gen. 1:27,28; 2:21-24) for man's joy, blessing and fruitfulness. How God desires that the marriage union picture the union of Christ and His bride, the Church—that this precious union be one of joy, delight and strength!

Strength and Satisfaction

Abraham well knew that if his beloved Isaac were to marry one from the godless land through which he walked a *pilgrim and stranger*, not only would Isaac's joy and promised blessings suffer, but Abraham's God-given promises of blessing and heritage in Canaan (which he enjoyed by faith) would suffer harm and loss to his future generations.

Faith in God that results in blessing requires both strength and energy—the principle of “son”—to be found in happy Christian marriages. “*Therefore we are always confident ... (For we walk by faith, not by sight)*” (2 Cor 5:6,7).

How happy Christian marriages may be, both in satisfaction and strength for preservation, in a world which scorns the sacredness of this union. And too, such unions have strength to produce “fruit” (examples for generations that follow) if the Lord tarry.

Not only are children the blessed “fruit” of Christian marriages, but too, the example of faith, joy, love and a strong, abiding marriage union—morally characterized by the “son” aspect—is wonderful, precious fruit as well. And all of these things will be seen in Christian marriages where there is prayer and energy exercised in morally caring for the “son” aspect.

April 2006

“*And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell*” (Gen. 24:4).

A Servant

The third of the seven persons mentioned in Gen. 24 from whom we desire to glean principles for stable, happy marriages is Abraham's oldest “*servant*” who “*took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed*” (Gen. 22:10).

How instructive to see the one who had served Abraham longest had gained the Patriarch's trust; “*all the goods of his master were in his hand*” (v. 10). Abraham would trust none other but his eldest, most reliable servant to carry out the delicate, absolutely vital mission of gaining a suitable bride for his beloved Isaac.

As we read through this lovely record, it is obvious that this dear servant clearly had faith in the God of his master. He had followed an *example of faith* and it served him well in this mission. We see him acting throughout in prayer and dependence, leaving all with the Lord to guide and bring the desired result.

How important that there be such a *servant* character displayed by both partners if a happy, fruitful marriage is to be enjoyed. *Eldest servant* would morally suggest that the character of husband and wife serving each other is not a *one time* thing—it is a *lifetime* commitment!

In verse 32 we learn another important moral lesson—the servant had *men* (other servants) with him. So it is in marriage that each partner has qualities and abilities to help them serve their spouse. Sometimes there is a danger of selfishness—a *me first* attitude—and those abilities that might be used for the benefit of the marriage partner are used only for the gratification of the one who has them. But true service, as seen perfectly displayed in the life of our Lord Jesus, always thinks of another first. Rather, it always seeks ways to be a help and blessing to another, always putting others before self.

Truly happy marriages can't exist if a “master/ slave” relationship exists between husband and wife. The husband is the *head* of his wife, but she is joined as *one with* him, not as a *slave to* him. Serving is something both can and ought to do for each other.

“*And God called their name, Adam*” (Gen 5:2).

“*By love serve one another*” (Gal. 5:2).

May 2006

“*Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water*” (Gen. 24:13).

The Daughters of Men

The fourth of the seven persons mentioned in Gen. 24 from whom we desire to glean some principles for stable, happy marriages is that group the servant refers to in his prayer to God; *the daughters of men*.

May we never forget that the divine, unchangeable Word of God *never* contemplates the marriage union as taking place other than between a man and a woman. It was from the *daughters* of the men of that city that the servant desired to find a suitable companion for his master's beloved son, Isaac.

God's divinely instituted union of marriage has been horribly defiled and corrupted in this last dark hour before the Lord Jesus calls His beloved bride home to Himself. Man increasingly views marriage as an unnecessary, unimportant ritual, or, even worse, corrupts it into a wicked union God calls *abomination* (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 22:5).

When God preserved Noah from the coming flood, he and his three sons were preserved *with* their wives. Further, God instructed Noah to take of every beast, *the male and its female* (Gen. 7:2, JND Trans.). May God preserve each dear married couple, and the beloved young people too, in a day increasingly marked by the moral depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah.

There is another important principle found in the servant's prayer desiring that God clearly show him who the woman was that would become Isaac's wife. There were no doubt, many young women who came to *the well to draw water* for that was normally one of the daily tasks of women. But though all were from the same city and doubtless there were many "eligible" young women for the servant to consider, there was but one that God had marked out for Isaac.

Each marriage experiences times of stress and differences between partners. These are occasions when "grace", "gentleness", "love" and *all* the fruits of the Spirit must be displayed. The enemy of our souls ever seeks to cause such unhappiness between marriage partners, they can begin to think there might be someone better. But if married "*in the Lord*" (1 Cor. 7:39) there is *no better* spouse than the one you have! "*This is my beloved, and this is my friend...*" (SS 5:16). "*Rejoice with the wife of thy youth...*" (Prov. 5:18).

June 2006

"*And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell*" (Gen. 24:4).

The Prospective Bride

The **fifth** person of the seven mentioned in Gen. 24 from whom we desire to glean principles for stable, happy marriages, is one of the two main characters of this account—Rebekah, the prospective bride.

The moral purity and character of Rebekah provides a wonderful pattern for young Christian women to follow and also provide excellent guides for young Christian men seeking a godly life's companion. When applied in principle to marriages (by *both* partners) they result in providing stability, joy and blessing.

Bearing and Drawing

"*Rebekah came out...with her pitcher on her shoulder*" (v. 15). Rebekah did not come out to publicly 'display herself' but rather to serve, bearing a burden for the blessing of others. Husband and wife both must be eager 'burden bearers' in marriage—in daily practical things as well as trials and difficulties each marriage union faces. Above all, how wonderful when each partner in marriage is daily found *drawing water* from the Word of God for the blessing of their spouse and others as well!

Beauty, Purity and Dignity

The Spirit of God has been pleased to record that Rebekah was a beautiful woman. But, we may say, far more important than her *outward beauty* was her *inward purity*. The violent and morally corrupted world in which we live takes perverse delight in degrading and defiling the marriage union God has instituted. God requires man to maintain marriage as He instituted it—in purity and dignity. The natural delights of marriage are certainly encouraged by our God (read, for example, the Song of Solomon). Marriages that maintain the dignity, purity and natural joy between partners as God has intended are strong, happy and honoring to Him.

Eager Service, Willing Hospitality

Rebekah next exhibits two more wonderful qualities. She is constantly *running*, eager to serve while confident that her home is a place of courtesy and hospitality extended to others. Eager service and joyful hospitality, exhibited by husband *and* wife (towards each other first, then towards others) are foundations of a happy marriage.

July 2006

"*And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell*" (Gen. 24:4).

Rebekah's Family

The **sixth** person (rather we should say '*group*') that we will consider regarding happy, stable Christian marriages is Rebekah's *family*. We desire to specially consider Rebekah's brother, father and mother as providing quite important principles.

How Important is Headship?

It seems strange that so little is said of Bethuel. Rebekah mentions him as her father in answer to the servant's question (v. 23). But his name is mentioned only one other time in this account (v. 50). It does not seem that Bethuel had much impact on his family, nor took the role that was his as head of his family. In contrast we remember what God said of Abraham in Gen. 18:17-19: "*For I know him [Abraham], that he will **command** his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord...*".

Headship in marriage is absolutely vital (both in the spiritual and natural realms). God has given that role to the man—the husband—and if he does not fulfill that responsibility in the fear of God, in dependence upon God and in obedience to His precious Word, marriages quickly slip into chaos.

Bethuel seems rather to be a 'nonentity' in a situation where he should have taken the lead. It was his daughter that was receiving a proposal for marriage and

we would have expected Bethuel to take a major role in dealing with Abraham's servant. While it was a happy thing that her brother and mother had an interest in this life-changing decision their sister/daughter was about to make, Bethuel seems sadly disinterested in the whole matter. The only words recorded that Bethuel spoke suggest this: "*we cannot speak unto thee bad or good*". Surely a father ought to display far more concern in his daughter's life companion.

Husbands and wives must never allow such a nonchalant, disinterested attitude to mark their marriage union. It is vital that each display, in the sphere they occupy in that union, a vital, energetic and undiminished interest in all the affairs of marriage.

How Important is Money?

On the other hand, Laban seems to display a keen, but suspect kind of interest. He clearly takes the lead in all Rebekah's marriage arrangements. Was it solely due to a loving concern for the welfare of his sister? It does not seem so when we read Rebekah's brother's words. A valid question arises in the heart as to the real motives which guided Laban's heart (and they are motives that, in his dealing with Jacob years later, seem to still be his guide).

We read in verses 30, 31 that "*when he [Laban] saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister saying, Thus spake the man unto me ... he said [to Abraham's servant], Come in, thou blessed of the Lord;...*". Hospitality and courtesy on Laban's part seemed to depend very much on the riches that he had seen given to his sister and had heard about as described by Abraham's servant. Covetousness is such a dangerous and deadly spirit and where allowed, always works ruin and sorrow.

Nowhere is this spirit more destructive than when allowed marriage where love for a spouse becomes dependent on what that spouse provides—materially or in others ways too. *Husbands, love your wives* (Eph. 5:25) is not a conditional command based on *if they are rich*. Such a thought has no place in God's Word, nor in the marriage union. How cheap and empty the marital love is where it only exists because of what one spouse *receives* from the other! Such can never sustain a happy marriage.

How Important is Family?

Rebekah's mother exerts another influence—one of the most difficult for marriages. Family affections, when allowed to hinder or direct marriage, are as destructive as lack of headship or covetousness.

Again we find Laban taking the lead, but this time with his mother rather than his father. Perhaps he thought that more of Abraham's riches might be left with the family if they could keep Rebekah for *ten days* (many translations read that as *ten months of days* or as *a year*).

No doubt Rebekah's mother's heart was sad,

realizing she probably would never see her daughter again. Such natural feelings aren't wrong (and ought to be given due consideration), but *never* can they be allowed to direct or guide a marriage union. "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife*". Familial affections, though very good and appropriate, and to honored ("*honour thy father and thy mother*"), must not become obligations which control a marriage union.

August 2006

"*And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell*" (Gen. 24:4).

Rebekah's Nurse

The last group of the seven we will consider in gleaned practical principles for stable happy marriages is Rebekah's nurse, Deborah. Her name means "a bee". How busy a little bee is in its daily occupation of caring for its hive! Its whole day is spent gathering sweet nectar needed to feed and sustain life in the hive.

Husband and wives need to become 'bees' as well! Both must spend each day seeking to provide sweetness and sustenance needed to care for and support their marriage against the world's icy blasts of heartless, uncaring coldness. Marriages where both partners are 'busy as bees' keeping their marriage warm, vibrant and loving, are indeed happy, stable unions!

When Rebekah said, "*I will go*", one went with her who had her interest and welfare as a constant occupation. "*And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men*" (Gen. 24:59). Dear husbands and wives, are you busy each day *nursing* your marriage union?

Scripture records several nurses and we may learn much from the blessing they brought.

Through God's overruling hand, Moses' own mother became his nurse for Pharaoh's daughter. Surely that dear mother-nurse *redeemed the time*, letting no opportunity slip that could be used to teach her precious little boy what he would need when facing the world of Pharaoh's court (Exo. 2). In happy marriages, both partners will be constantly occupied in finding ways to strengthen their union.

Naomi became nurse to Ruth's son, Obed, the grandfather of King David who is the beautiful forerunner of Christ (Matt. 21:9). Naomi's history is one of failure, but shining over all her sorrow is the moment when she "returned", owning that God's hand had been upon her (Ruth 1:20,21). That 'repentance' we may say was the beginning of untold blessing as dear Naomi *laid the child in her bosom*. To keep a marriage happy and stable, it will

be necessary at times to say, “Honey, I was wrong”. Marriage is not only very precious, it is very delicate and easily marred. Cherish your marriage relationship, keeping it lying in *your bosom*.

Mephibosheth had a nurse as well. It seems her natural inclination to protect the object of her care and her unbelief in David’s kindness, caused her to bring lifelong lameness to Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 4:4). Dear husbands and wives, be careful that misunderstandings don’t cause you to question your spouse’s love.

When the wicked Athaliah slew all of the rightful descendents to the throne, that she might usurp the kingdom, faithful *Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber* (2 Chron. 22:11).

In this *present evil world* it is vital that husband and wife *hide* their marriage union in a place of rest and quiet (*bedchamber*). That is, morally keep marriage separate from what defiles and destroys. These dangers exist in every facet of society: the world’s entertainments, dangers existing at work where men and women are often required to spend time in close contact, clothing fashions, etc. and most dangerous of all, its continually changing standards of morality.

It is impossible to keep from contact with these things “*for then must ye needs go out of the world*” (1 Cor. 5:10). But a ‘nursing’ spirit displayed by both partners will cherish and strengthen a marriage, morally hiding it from a world whose prince—Satan—is bent on the total destruction of this God ordained institution.

“*But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children*” (1 Thess. 2:7). May God grant husbands and wives to be faithful, gentle *nurses* to their marriage union!

September 2006

“*And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived*” (Gen. 25:21).

Supplication is earnest prayer on behalf of another; prayer that forgets self while it is continually occupied in praying for the blessing for others. What a wonderful and absolutely vital principle for marriages!

We live in a world totally given up to the humanistic concept of “me first”. At the root of this sad, dangerous thinking is selfishness—to coin a word; ‘*self first-ness*’. How quickly the joy of a marriage union will become strained, marred and eventually lost when either partner exhibits such an un-Christ like spirit towards their mate.

Our Lord Jesus presents the perfect pattern of *unselfishness*. He was ever and always perfectly submitted to His Father’s will (Psa. 40:8; Luke 22:42)

and always seeking the good and blessing of souls (Mark 6:34). His perfect example of *selflessness* is the only safe pattern for husbands and wives to follow in their marriage union, if that union is to grow, strengthen and produce increasing joy and delight.

Rebekah must surely have been unhappy due to her apparent inability to bear children. Isaac’s actions in view of this are lovely to consider and vital to practice in our marriages.

Rather than expressing dissatisfaction and displeasure *to* Rebekah, we find that dear Isaac supplicated (‘*intreated*’) the Lord *for* Rebekah.

How much hurt, tension, and unhappiness would be avoided in marriages if both husbands and wives acted towards each other in this same tender spirit of love, considering one another’s feelings.

Is there some trial or difficulty causing sorrow and struggles for your beloved spouse? Entreat the Lord, praying *for* them in a spirit of earnest supplication *before* you talk *to* them. Above all, when discussing such personal things, do so in a spirit of lowliness and humility. “*Let your word be always with grace, seasoned with salt, so as to know how ye ought to answer each one*” (Col 4:6, JND Trans.).

The Lord honored dear Isaac’s prayer of supplication (“*intreaty*”) for his beloved Rebekah. She was given the joy of having children. May husbands and wives, in like manner, experience the fruits of joy and peace in marriage through mutual supplication! “*For even Christ pleased not himself...*” (Rom. 15:3).

October 2006

“*And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her.*” (Gen. 26:9).

Perhaps nothing is more destructive to the God-given institution of marriage than when, by action, word or even thought, a husband morally lives in a way which publicly denies the truth of his marriage union.

Isaac had, like his father in a former time, (see Gen. 12) experienced a *time of famine*; a time when *satisfaction was found wanting*. Though not turning to the world for help as it is morally pictured in Egypt, in going to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, Isaac, like his dear father Abraham, made a poor choice.

Husbands, if something about your marriage doesn’t seem satisfying or right—if there is, as it were, a time of want (“*famine*”) in your union—be warned that turning to *any* of the world for help (from its power, wealth or ways) is not the solution.

Isaac turned to the Philistine as his father had turned to the Egyptian. In both cases, God was the only

lasting source of help. Dealing in marvelous sovereign grace with His dear saint, God plainly commanded Isaac not to go to Egypt, but rather, to stay in the Philistine land to which he fled for help.

Perhaps, when something is perceived to be lacking in a marriage union, turning to the world and its ways initially seems to solve the immediate need. But our God allows deep testing of the lasting value of such decisions which put the world and its ways ahead of faith in His provision, wisdom and help.

How striking to see that before we read of Isaac's gaining wealth in Gerar, we see his marriage relationship and his commitment to his beloved Rebekah severely tested—and we see Isaac sadly fail: "... *Because I said, Lest I die for her*" (Gen. 26:9).

Dear husbands! the cost of turning to the world to find some satisfaction you feel lacking in your marriage will cause a like public, moral denial of your beloved wife. Isaac put himself first—desiring personal life and satisfaction—rather than being willing to deny himself and, if need be, die for Rebekah.

Dear husbands, let's you and I seek by God's grace, to search *ourselves first* if we feel some lack (*famine*) in our marriages. And let's also follow the gloriously perfect example of our Lord Jesus Christ: "*Who loved the church and gave Himself for it*".

November 2006

"And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother ..." (Gen. 27:5,6).

Loving, constant, and open dialog is absolutely vital between husband and wife. If the joy of daily, private, personal conversation (dealing with every facet of marriage and life) is neglected between spouses, the result will be growing separation and aloofness, causing tremendous damage to marriages.

We see this strikingly illustrated in this sorrowful episode recorded in God's Word between Isaac and Rebekah. Rather than speaking to each other, knowing what would please each other, Isaac and Rebekah share private desires and plans with their sons—a path which we find leading to terribly sad consequences.

The Spirit of God has not seen fit to reveal all the details of what caused this subtle separation between Isaac and Rebekah. However we do know that Isaac loved Esau and Rebekah loved Jacob—in itself a very sad and dangerous separation of husband and wife who ought to have been of one mind in all things.

Let us notice, for our learning, some events that have been recorded, seeking to glean principles which

might preserve and strengthen our marriages.

(1) Isaac's request to his son, Esau, is a rather *selfish* request (see vv. 3-5): "*hunt me venison*"; "*prepare me a savoury dish such as I love*"; "*bring it to me that I may eat*". "*that my soul may bless thee before I die*". Poor Isaac; *seven* references to himself, *one* reference to his son. Dear Isaac treated Esau more as a servant than a son. There is no place for such an attitude in marriage. A happy marriage is not built on "*me first*", but rather on "*thee first*".

(2) Rebekah, Isaac's wife, evidently had not provided all that a spouse ought to seek every opportunity to provide for their partner; satisfaction. How good if Isaac, soon to depart this world, would have been able to call his beloved wife and ask her to prepare that which would satisfy his heart, rather than calling his son, Esau.

(3) Notice that in verse 5 Isaac speaks to *his* son (Esau) while in verse 6 Rebekah speaks to *her* son (Jacob). How sad that Esau and Jacob weren't called *their* sons! May husbands and wives be diligent that their marriage be a union of *oneness* in all things.

December 2006

"And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife" (Gen. 28:1,8,9).

What sad ruin is worked in marriage relationships where actions by either spouse are taken in order to 'spite' their partner in the spirit of 'I'll show you!'. Sadly such a spirit is very prevalent in this present age. The wreckage and sorrow resulting when a husband or wife purposely does something they know will displease their spouse is evident on every hand today. May God grant grace to dear Christian couples to reject in every way, the slightest thought of the flesh to follow such a course.

Esau was, no doubt, still angry and distressed over the loss of parental blessings that would have been his had he not despised his birthright, seemed to feel justified in purposely doing what he knew would bring grief to his father, Isaac.

There are times in all marriage unions when a spouse may do or say something which arouses the flesh in their partner to react by 'getting even'. Every sphere of a marriage union has the potential for causing this sad display of flesh, if both partners do not seek grace to walk as one in heart and mind.

"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Col. 3:19). "*Let every one of you ... so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence ['fear' or 'respect'] her husband"* (Eph 5:33). "*That they may teach the young women to be sober, to*

love their husbands, to love their children” (Titus 2:4).

These are God’s commands to Christian husbands and wives. Disobedience to them will only reap sorrow and enmity—such as has existed between the descendants of Jacob and Esau to this day. May dear husbands and wives be found *walking in love* (Eph 5:2).

