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A Very Sexy Creation and the Balance of Power

Genesis 2:15-25

October 28, 2007

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Last week was something of an introduction to this week and the sermons to follow. And there was a blizzard last week that closed down I-70 on Sunday morning. So if you missed the message, would you please pick up a free CD in the back, or one of our sermon booklets? You can also listen on-line at www.lomcc.org.

But before you write me a letter, listen to last week's message. There's more to be said than can be said in one sermon, and we all have wounds, to which I hope to speak.

Last week I ended the message with this point: We are all uncomfortable, frustrated, sexual beings. And in that regard, we each have a unique wound. Yet Jesus will even use our wounds. He will *especially* use our wounds to show up and fill us with Himself. So relax, have no fear, and let's pray:

[Prayer] Jesus, there are single people in this room who desperately want to be married. And there are married people in this room who desperately want to be single. And there are people in this room who are struggling with pornography. Some are struggling with adultery, fornication, broken covenants, temptations, homosexuality, or gender issues.

Jesus, would you meet us in all of these wounds? Would you give us hope? Lord God, the Evil One has lied to us so deeply about the Gospel that has been written into our very flesh. So, Lord, I claim the blood of your covenant over this sanctuary—and that's not this building; it's these people—that you would guard us from the lies of the Evil One. Help us to trust in your goodness, Lord Jesus. For we are your Bride. And it's in your name that we pray, and ask you to help us preach, amen.

I grew up during the Cold War. It was the Cold War abroad, and it was the Cold War at South Elementary School in Littleton, Colorado. Along with Field Day, the very worst day for me was Valentine's Day. (Talk about stress! It was worse than the Cuban Missile Crisis.)

For an entire week before that dreaded day, we would each work frantically preparing our valentine receptacles: shoe boxes with rubber cement, construction paper, and glitter . . . bright plumage attached to the outside of each to attract valentines.

We set them on the windowsill next to the playground, and for ten, agonizing minutes, we distributed our valentines. I'm sure some teacher reminded us it was about giving, but we all knew that was just a line. It was all about *getting* valentines. It was survival of the fittest.

So if you gave a valentine to some girl, for instance, and she didn't give one to you, it was a crisis. Why? Because you just exposed a weakness for her that was not reciprocated by an equal and opposite weakness. All at once, she was in a position of power in a Cold War situation. You might as well just fall at her feet crying:

I'm not worthy! Please don't flaunt your full valentine receptacle over mine—so light, so empty, so void of cards and candy hearts, save for one cowboy valentine from Mrs. Black saying, "Howdy, Partner!"

There should be a law: Every child will receive the exact same number of valentines, and every valentine will be exactly the same. *No differences*. Otherwise, folks get crucified.

- That's the danger of love in this fallen world.
- That's the danger of acknowledged differences in a Cold War situation.
- That's the danger of revealed weakness. It destroys the balance of power.

You realize that the Cold War was all about a balance of power. Democracy is about a balance of power. Our government is constructed to maintain a balance of power. Our Declaration of Independence states: "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal."

Well, if anything is *not* self-evident, I would think it would be that. I mean, some men are created short and some tall. Some men have low IQ's; some men have high IQ's. Some have low EQ's; some have high EQ's. It appears that God created them that way: unequal.

So it's really not self-evident that all are equal, or even that all should be allowed to vote. Indeed, the founders wouldn't let minorities, slaves, and women vote. And now, some of you are stressing because I'm messing with the balance of power in a Cold War situation.

So let me say: Our system of government seems to me to be the very best system for a government in a fallen world where power needs to be balanced between sinners for the good of the whole. However, it is not "self-evident that all men are created equal," especially if by equal we mean the same.

The Bible does teach that each person has equal value, for each person is equally loved by God, that is, with all He has and is. However, the Bible is pretty clear that we're each different. And although it feels like a curse in this place, it will be revealed as a blessing in another place. But now we're in this place.

So we're each different, and although we try to legislate equality, there is one fundamental difference that's pretty tough to completely legislate away.

Genesis 1:27:

*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them. And God blessed them.*

People come in two very distinct models, and God blessed the difference.¹ Yet so often it feels like a curse. I mean, it's difficult to think of anything that has produced more pain than the difference between men and women.

Men have objectified, abused, and raped women for ages. But women have also raped men. Their weapon may not be physical strength, but there are other types of strength that may be far more subtle and even more painful.

Whatever the case, pain is like a "sexually transmitted reality"—an STR. So it only makes sense that we'd do all we could to eliminate the differences and balance the power.

In modern society, we've done a pretty bang up job. Nowadays, males probably have the most reason to feel inferior. Women can do just about everything men can do . . . but men can't have babies. The only thing men can do that women can't is go potty standing up . . . but even that is controversial.

When my daughter Elizabeth was a toddler, she used to stand in front of the toilet throwing tantrums and making a terrible mess because she couldn't get her plumbing to work like her older brother Jon. Yet her plumbing is designed to make babies. She couldn't see it at the time, but that's even more amazing than the ability to write your name in the snow. You know what I mean?

Well, modern science has learned to re-route plumbing such that women can get an operation and write their name in the snow too. And they're already working on men having babies.

You see, we've told ourselves that sexual differences are only plumbing deep. So all the valentines are really just the same.²

It's clear that the safest possible world would be an entire world named *Pat*. Remember that old *Saturday Night Live* skit where everyone in the office would try to guess if Pat was male or female? It was kind of a mean skit and a sad skit. Sad because some have been so wounded in the war between the sexes that the only logical option they see is to declare neutrality . . . or even switch sides, hoping that all the valentines are really the same.

We've done it in church with gender neutral Bibles³, non-gender specific theology, and the elimination of gender roles. It makes some sense.

I think my worst day in seminary was on a particular day in 1985 in Cecil M. Roebeck's class on Pastoral Theology (or something like that). We were talking about the roles of men and women in the family and church. I just raised my hand and asked a question, something like: "I don't think I hate women; I just don't understand how you reconcile what you're saying with I Timothy 2:11-13."

I'm still confused about that, and I only asked the question, but what happened next was like World War III. I mean, a whole lot of women got up and just ripped into me for about a half-hour. It was clear there had been a lot of pain, and I was questioning the balance of power in a Cold War situation.

Then this guy, who I'm convinced really wanted a date, got up and apologized to all the women on my behalf. Then Professor Roebeck ended the discussion. But nobody answered my question!

Now let me say: **I didn't write the Bible**. And I'm still confused by the questions. But God seems to be okay with the questions. In fact, it appears as if He's responsible for the war. I mean, *He* made us male and female.

- And the differences are not shallow but deep.
- And the differences are not simple but subtle.
- And the different gender roles in Scripture are not clear but highly debatable.⁴

It's like God set us up, and we're in a war. And the war is so cold at times, we can barely even talk about it.

The Cold War.

And now here's the strangest thing yet: Henry Kissinger said it best (the great statesman with so much experience negotiating in a Cold War situation): "I am convinced that no one will win the war between the sexes, for there is far too much fraternizing with the enemy."

That's so true! My greatest wars have been with a female named Susan. And we'll fight over things that are invariably related to our gender. At times, I'll become deeply offended at her female perspective and conclusions. And we will go to war, and often the war will go cold.

Yet along about the third day, I won't be able to maintain my resolve. For I'll find myself overwhelmed with this intense desire to go fraternize with the enemy. And then, not only do our gender differences appear to be less of a problem; those differences actually become the attraction.

- Pay attention: The very thing that offended me becomes the very thing that utterly captivates me.
- "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth [and He was speaking of His cross], will draw all men [Adam] to myself" (John 12:32).
- C. S. Lewis writes:

Have as much equality as you please—the more the better—in our marriage laws: but at some level consent to inequality, nay, delight in inequality, it is an erotic necessity.

So pain is sexually transmitted, but ecstasy is also sexually transmitted. *Life* is sexually transmitted. *You* have been sexually transmitted—an STR. Isn't that strange?

Different valentines . . . blatant inequality . . . fraternizing with the enemy . . . warm sex in the midst of a Cold War which produces life. Who would have thought of such a thing?—almost as if it were a sign from another world or *for* another world.

Genesis 2:18-25:

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man [Adam] should be alone . . .

Last time we talked about how he was alone in the presence of God, who is love. So his aloneness must have been subjective, not objective. He wasn't alone . . . yet he

was.

“It is not good that the man [Adam] should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

Last week we preached about that helper. Scripture tells us that God is mankind’s helper. That word *ayzer* applies to God, and that word implies strength where another is weak.

God seems to ask Adam, “Where’s your helper?” He points to all the animals and His very sexy creation. “Adam, mankind, where’s your helper?” Adam needs a helper, but Adam doesn’t find his helper.

The Lord God is our helper.

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man [Adam], and while he slept took one of his ribs [or side] and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib [side] that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man [the Adam].

Did you remember that Jesus is the last Adam? And did you remember that we are His Bride, who will be presented to Him in splendor? And did you remember that we are created at His wounded side with body broken and blood shed? God “brought her to the Adam.”

Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

Some say she was made from the rib, because it’s a cheaper cut. Some say Adam was only a prototype, and Eve was the pinnacle of creation. How many say cheaper cut? How many say pinnacle of creation?

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Adam (mankind) had been incomplete without his helper. And now Adam is incomplete within himself as his own helper. I mean, God has divided Adam into two parts that become one. When the two parts become one body, they join together in a very specific place with very specific organs designed to connect the depths of their being. The organs (especially on him) look like internal organs on the outside of the body. There’s Adam, so sleek and good-looking . . . and what’s *that* doing there? It looks like it should be in the inside, not on the outside.

He has a part she does not have, and she has a part he does not have. It is their inequality and their difference. His part is convex; her part is concave. His fullness fits

her emptiness.

Adam and Eve help each other, but that help is a sign and not the substance. The substance belongs to Christ, for God is our helper.

In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul quotes this verse saying:

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Jesus is our helper.

Back to Genesis:

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

This is a very sexy creation. “Not ashamed”—that’s sexy. But now, what would they be ashamed of?

Well, where is it that *we* feel shame? And what do we cover?

- We cover that point where our difference is exposed.
- We cover that point that reveals our need and incompleteness.
- We cover that place where we are unequal and thus vulnerable to pain and the abuse of power.
- We cover that place that is connected to our heart.
- We cover that place that manifests the deep sexuality that is encoded within every cell in our body.
- We cover that point where diversity becomes unity in the image of God.
- We cover that point where two become one and produce life.
- We cover that point where Adam enters the bride—his temple—his body—and gives her his seed, and she bears fruit that is life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control.

We cover *that*; we cover the difference.

The theologian Emil Bruner wrote, “The physical differences between the man and the woman are a parable of the physical and spiritual differences of a more ultimate nature.” One fills, and the other is filled. One refers to Christ, and the other to His Bride. We cover *that*.

But Adam and Eve were both “naked and unashamed.” In fact, they were rejoicing in their differences. Not threatened or offended by the difference, but rejoicing in the difference. Indeed rejoicing in their own need for the other’s difference. Unashamed and needy: that’s an incredibly sexy creation.

Bride of Christ, realize that you need your Groom, and you shouldn’t be ashamed of that fact.

You see, sin isn’t needing God your helper; sin is denying that you need God your

helper, knowing that you need and denying that you need: that is, hiding your nakedness from Him and being offended at His love for you—*grace*.

Well, God made a very sexy creation, and Satan plotted to produce a very sexless desecration. He hates diversity, and most of all, he hates love.

So, as you know, he tempts Adam and Eve to complete themselves and so cover their need with law—

“the knowledge of good and evil.” Adam and Eve fall, and they cover their differences with law (leaves from the tree). And they hide their need for God with law. (They hide in the trees.)

They cover *that* part, and they *should* cover that part, because for the first time they feel self-consciousness, shame, and fear. In fear, they will abuse revealed weakness in a Cold War situation. In fear, they will take and refuse to give. Then Valentine’s Day will be all about consuming valentines and not exchanging valentines. It will be all about *lust* rather than love.

They hide *that* part, and they *should* hide that part. It needs to be protected with skin, leather, and law. It must have been the greatest sorrow for God as He slaughtered an animal. (I bet it was a lamb.) He slaughtered an animal and used its skin to make clothes to cover their nakedness which had now become shame.

Their differences no longer felt like a blessing but a curse: a point of weakness in a Cold War situation.

Now we cover *those* parts, and according to Scripture, we *should* cover those parts . . . except in one situation: the covenant of marriage.

It’s almost like marriage is to be a walled garden in a fallen and cold world, a sanctuary bound by a covenant where two people can experience communion and, if for only a moment, taste the ecstatic relationship of another world. You see, God knew what would happen before He made Adam male and female and bound them in a covenant. He knew about the Fall and the impending Cold War. He *knew*.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying it refers to Christ and the Church.”

When you come to Christ, you enter His covenant and begin to believe and receive His love.

So you no longer have to be threatened by inequalities or imprisoned in fear over your own inadequacies. His love is more than enough. Thus inequalities are no longer threats to be neutralized but

invitations to love and be loved. “We love because He first loved us.”

It’s scary, and it hurts. Learning to love in this Cold War world can get you crucified . . . but that’s how we get back to the Garden, and that’s how the kingdom comes down. So that’s how we enjoy Valentine’s Day here and now.

My friend Ruth Anne Thompson from Danville, California told me a story about her son Chad. Chad’s little brother Ryan was in my youth group and was really popular. Chad, on the other hand, when he was young was unpopular. He didn’t have many friends and never got much in the way of valentines.

Well, one year he told Ruth Anne, “This year, Mommy, I want to give a valentine to every kid in my class.” That really troubled Ruth Anne, because she knew the gift would probably not be reciprocated. But she helped him anyway. Together they worked

so hard . . . a bit of Chad's body and blood in each and every one.

On Valentine's Day, she waited for him after school with a knot in her stomach. She prepared a plate of cookies, anticipating a little boy with a broken heart.

When the bus arrived, she watched intently as children got off laughing and playing. And then her heart sank: As always, Chad was in back walking by himself. His hands were empty—not a scrap, not a note. Tears came to her eyes. She ran out to meet him, and Chad said, "Not a one, Mommy, not a one." He smiled and said, "Mommy, I didn't miss a one!"

When Jesus of Nazareth ascended from the Garden in which He had been crucified on the tree, I picture His Father running out to meet Him, fresh holes from nails pounded in His hands and feet, a tremendous wound on His side, carrying nothing but a smile as He says, "Not a one, Father, not a one. I didn't miss a one! I gave each a

gift of flesh and blood, fashioned to fit every wound. I died for them all, Father, the sins of the whole world!"

See the difference?

He's different from you. He's like you, and yet different. He is steadfast love that never ceases; mercy that never comes to an end. And you are *not*. Does the difference offend you? The difference fulfills the whole law. Does the difference offend you? It is the judgment. Does it offend you? Jesus said, "Blessed is he who is not offended at me."

If you surrender your difference to His difference, the offense becomes the greatest blessing.

You know, the cross is called the offense of this world. The cross reveals the difference between the great Bridegroom and His Bride. At the cross, God's heart is exposed to us, and He invites us to expose our hearts to Him.

Before you come to His table, close your eyes and picture His cross and make this your prayer:

You're there. You're in the crowd. He's about thirty feet in front of you. They have Him hanging only a few feet above the ground so people can spit on Him and mock Him. He's been a threat, and now the establishment is balancing the power.

He is exposed in weakness. His weakness is love. The hatred for Him is utterly intense. You feel it too. Confess it. In other words, confess your sin.

Right now, confess your sins. Maybe it's someone you haven't forgiven. Maybe it's lust, pornography, adultery, or some affair. Maybe it's greed while millions starve. Think of it. Confess it. Now hold out your hand.

A thick, black nail materializes in your hand. It's your sin. No sooner than it does, someone grabs the nail. It's a Roman soldier. He walks to the cross and drives it through Jesus' flesh into the wood as he yells, "Go to hell, king of the Jews!"

Now, listen. This is not something that *may* happen. This is something that *has* already happened.

The sky grows black; the earth shakes. Any balance of power is an illusion. It's all His. But there He is, covered in spit, blood, and open wounds.

He lifts His head, and His eyes lock on yours. Don't look away. His eyes burn like fire, but don't look away. You watch His lips as they form these words: "I love you. I

give all for you. I love you.”

That’s the difference.

He is unending love, and you are not. Are you offended? For when you first see the truth, it feels like an abyss, a pit in your stomach. It’s called shame. You can hide there, and then I believe it’s called hell.

You can hide your shame, or you can surrender your shame so that He might fill you—the emptiness that is you. He longs to fill you.

And when He does, what appeared to be an offense will become an ecstatic blessing. It begins here and even now. Pray: “Jesus, I confess myself, and I call upon you, my helper.”

He is the helper fit for you. See . . . God has made Himself a helper fit for you.

He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you. Take and eat.” In the same manner after supper, He took the cup and said, “This is my blood of the covenant poured out for the forgiveness of sins.”

Blood of the covenant—it’s a covenant, Bride. His body; His blood.

Worship Him. His difference fits your difference. His grace fits your shame.

[Prayer] And so, Lord Jesus, we thank you for your promise given with your own flesh and blood that you will do it. And we will be presented to you, and we will dance on the streets that are golden. Lord God, I think that means that all of the wounds of this world, the places where we’ve hoped and our hopes were dashed, the places where, Lord, we think we’re experiencing the closest thing to heaven that we can imagine—it’s all just a sign pointed to something even better, that is, you.

Lord God, would you take all the fears in this room, all the shame in this room, all the confusion in this room, all the anger in this room, all the hopes in this room and steer them all toward your throne and toward that day when we will join you? Lord Jesus, we are your Bride—your temple—your body. So as a spokesman for your Bride, I say we surrender ourselves to you. The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come, Lord Jesus, and all who are thirsty come.”

Lord God, thank you for calling us to such incredible things. And now we pray that you would guard us from the lies of the Enemy . . . wherever he brings up pictures trying to distort the Gospel that’s been written into our very flesh, wherever he tries to remind us of things in the past that would distort what you’re trying to say. Lord God, we come against all those things, and we offer unto you our bodies, our spirits, our souls, our beings. Be glorified in us, Lord Jesus. In Jesus’ name, amen.

End Notes

¹Unity in diversity is in the image of God, as we preached in the spring.

²We tell ourselves you can have gay sex or straight sex; it really doesn't matter. But then you really can't celebrate diversity, because there's really no such thing as real diversity, just plumbing preference. You know, homophobic types are often accused of being intolerant of diversity. And I think they probably are. But it's hard to think of a more gut level intolerance for diversity than homosexuality, that is, "same sexuality." I'm not interested in blaming anyone, because there's a whole lot of pain in everyone, and pain is a sexually transmitted reality. I'm just saying here that it makes sense to me that we'd try to convince ourselves that the difference between the sexes is just a matter of the attachment we come with, and the act of sex is nothing more than a biological function like sneezing or blowing your nose.

³You can get gender neutral Bibles now in which male references to God are neutralized. It makes some sense, because words in the English language are usually not gender specific. But in many languages, all reality is divided between masculine and feminine. Leave it to the English to make all the valentines just the same.

⁴It's really hard to define the difference, yet it's abundantly clear there is one. Scientists tell us every cell in our body is male or female. If you have kids, you see it. I didn't teach them this, but when the boys would play, they'd smash things into each other. When the girls would play, they'd make things talk. (It used to drive the boys crazy when the girls would make their cars talk! And it drove the girls crazy when the boys would smash their dolls into each other!) I'm not sure what that means; I'm not saying that's the difference, but just that there is one. And, you see, even if gender gets confused, which it does, there has to be something called gender in order for it to be confused. Most languages divide all reality between genders, yet they're not clear on what gender is or what it means.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

~ *Genesis 1:27-28*

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

~ *Genesis 2:18-24*

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

~ *Genesis 3:6-8*

Our sexuality penetrates to the deepest metaphysical ground of our personality. As a result, the physical differences between the man and the woman are a parable of the psychical and spiritual differences of a more ultimate nature.

~ *Emil Brunner*

Unlikeness makes one feel strange or endangered—“different” to the point of alienation. At the least, unlikeness draws pity or snorts of scorn or blank, uncomprehending looks. Therefore, the partners strive to seem the same. They dress themselves in “like” opinions, in “like” habits, in “like” tastes and goals—but at bottom this sort of sameness is a truce and not the truth. They have become ashamed of their nakedness.

Then, truly, “in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” These spouses spend a great deal of energy denying much of the truth of themselves, of their own natures, repressing it so that they may live life with as little pain as possible. So close to another human being, yet so isolated. So lonely.

~ *Walter Wangerin, Jr., As For Me and My House*

Maybe the problem is not that people are getting naked, but that they aren’t getting naked enough: we stop at the skin instead of going deeper, into the soul.

~ *Philip Yancey, Finding God in Unexpected Places*

True masculinity and femininity emerge and develop only in the midst of other-centered relating. The more a man understands a woman and is controlled by a Spirit-prompted other-centered commitment to bless her, the more “masculine” he becomes. And he will become more masculine in an unselfconscious fashion. Ask this man to define masculinity, and he will need to think awhile before answering. In exactly the same way, the more a woman understands a man and is preoccupied with doing all she can for him, the more “feminine” she naturally becomes. We will neither understand nor enjoy our sexual natures until we take seriously our responsibility to use our distinct natures to serve others.

~ *Larry Crabb, Men and Women*

As the poet Yeats expressed this paradox, “Love has pitched his mansion in the place of excrement.” . . . Like prayer, sex is a thing of exertion, of sweat and of groaning, and like death it is intimately acquainted with surrender, with excretion, and with the mournful frailty and heart-rending glory of flesh. And these are all things that God has made. He made the woman with an open wound in her body, such that it can only be staunched by a man; and the man He made with a tumor, the maddening pressure of which is only alleviated when it is allowed to grow inside the woman’s womb. He made the man to root and to flower in the aching earth of a woman.

~ *Mike Mason, The Mystery of Marriage*

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

~ *Ephesians 5:31-32*

"Ah, equality!" said the Director. "We must talk of that some other time. Yes, we must all be guarded by equal rights from one another's greed, because we are fallen. Just as we must all wear clothes for the same reason. But the naked body should be there underneath the clothes ripening for the day when we shall need them no longer. Equality is not the deepest thing, you know."

"I always thought that was just what it was. I thought it was in their souls that people were equal."

"You were mistaken," said he gravely. "That is the last place where they are equal. Equality before the law, equality of incomes—that is very well. Equality guards life; it doesn't make it. It is medicine, not food. You might as well try to warm yourself with a blue-book."

"But surely in marriage . . .?"

"Worse and worse," said the Director. "Courtship knows nothing of it; nor does fruition. What has free companionship to do with that? Those who are enjoying something, or suffering something together, are companions. Those who enjoy or suffer one another, are not. Do you not know how bashful friendship is? Friends—comrades—do not look at each other. Friendship would be ashamed. . . ."

"I thought," said Jane and stopped.

"I see," said the Director. "It is not your fault. They never warned you. No one has ever told you that obedience—humility—is an erotic necessity." . . .

She had been conceiving this world as "spiritual" in the negative sense—as some neutral, or democratic vacuum where differences disappeared, where sex and sense were not transcended but simply taken away. Now the suspicion dawned upon her that there might be differences and contrasts all the way up, richer, sharper, ever fiercer, at every rung of the ascent. How if this invasion of her own being in marriage from which she had recoiled, often in the very teeth of instinct, were not, as she had supposed, merely a relic of animal life or patriarchal barbarism, but rather the lowest, the first, and the easiest form of some shocking contact with reality which would have to be repeated—but in ever larger and more disturbing modes—on the highest levels of all?

"Yes," said the director. "There is no escape. If it were a virginal rejection of the male, He would allow it. Such souls can bypass the male and go on to meet something far more masculine, higher up, to which they must make a yet deeper surrender. But your trouble has been what old poets called Daungler. We call it Pride. You are offended by the masculine itself: the loud, irruptive, possessive thing—the gold lion, the bearded bull—which breaks through hedges and scatters the little kingdom of your primness as the dwarfs scattered the carefully made bed. The male you could have escaped, for it exists only on the biological level. But the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it. You had better agree with your adversary quickly."

"You mean I shall have to become a Christian?" said Jane.

~ C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*

And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offense at me."

~ *Luke 7:22-23 (RSV)*

As it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

~ *Romans 9:33*

Nothing is more repugnant to capable, reasonable people than grace.

~ *Charles Wesley*

No matter how much we give lip service to the notion of free grace and dying love, we do not like it. It is just too. . . indiscriminate. It lets rotten sons and crooked tax farmers and common tarts into the kingdom, and it thumbs its nose at really good people. And it does that, gallingly, for no more reason than the Gospel's shabby exaltation of dumb trust over worthy works. Such nonsense, we mutter in our hearts; such heartless, immoral folly. We'll teach God, we say. We will continue to sing "Amazing Grace" in church; but we will jolly well be judicious when it comes to explaining to the riffraff what it actually means. We will assure them, of course, that God loves them and forgives them, but we will make it clear that we expect them to clean up their act before we clasp them seriously to our bosom. . . . As any preacher who seriously preaches the Gospel of grace can tell you, the troops are not amused by the prospect of absolutely free salvation. The first instinct of most Christians, after they have smiled indulgently at the preacher's charmingly easygoing concept of salvation, is to nail him to the wall for knocking the props out from under divine retribution for nasty deeds. They do not want grace, they want law.

~ *Robert Farrar-Capan, Kingdom, Grace, Judgment*

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

~ *Hebrews 4:15-16*

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
~ 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

The Ghost made a sound something between a sob and a snarl. “I wish I’d never been born,” it said. “What are we born for?” “For infinite happiness,” said the Spirit. “You can step out into it at any moment. . . .” “But, I tell you, they’ll see me.” “An hour hence and you will not care. A day hence and you will laugh at it. Don’t you remember on earth—there were things too hot to touch with your finger but you could drink them all right? Shame is like that. If you will accept it—if you will drink the cup to the bottom—you will find it very nourishing; but try to do anything else with it and it scalds.” Almost, I thought the Ghost had obeyed. Certainly it had moved: but suddenly it cried out: “No, I can’t. I tell you I can’t. For a moment, while you were talking, I almost thought . . . but when it comes to the point. . . . You’ve no right to ask me to do a thing like that. It’s disgusting. I should never forgive myself if I did. Never, never. And it’s not fair. They ought to have warned us. I’d never have come. And now—please, please go away!” “Friend,” said the Spirit. “Could you, only for a moment, fix your mind on something not yourself?”
~ C. S. Lewis, The Great Divorce

And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.
~ 1 John 2:28

Then our good Lord Jesus Christ asked me: “Are you well satisfied that I suffered for you?” I said: “Yes, good Lord, and I thank you very much. Yes, good Lord, may you be blessed.” Then Jesus our good Lord said: “If you are satisfied, I am satisfied. To have ever suffered the Passion for you is for me a great joy, a bliss, an endless delight; and if I could suffer more I would do so.”
~ Julian of Norwich, Journeys into Joy

I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace.
~ Song of Solomon 8:10

Have as much equality as you please—the more the better—in our marriage laws: but at some level consent to inequality, nay, delight in inequality, it is an erotic necessity.
~ C.S. Lewis

Nobody will ever win the battle of the sexes. There’s too much fraternizing with the enemy.
~ Henry Kissinger

**A Very Sexy Creation
and the Balance of Power**

Genesis 2:15-25

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October 28, 2007

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