

Better to Marry Than to Burn

In 1 Corinthians 7:9 Paul counsels young people to marry if they are not able to practice self-control. It is “better to marry than to burn” (KJV; or, in the NRSV translation, “to be aflame with passion”).

Chaucer uses the line to somewhat humorous effect in his famous *Canterbury Tales* (3.49–52). The sassy and oft-widowed Wife of Bath justifies her need for a sixth marriage:

“. . . th' apostle seith that I am free
To wedde, a Goddes half, where it liketh me.
He seith that to be wedded is no synne;
Bet is to be wedded than to brynne.”