

The Gospel Supper. (Luke 14:22-24)

by George Whitefield

The parable of the great supper teaches us about God's provision for perishing souls and the importance of humility and repentance in coming to the gospel feast.

Scripture: Psalm 34:8, Isaiah 55:1, Matthew 22:9, Luke 14:22, John 6:35, 2 Corinthians 6:2, Hebrews 3:15, Revelation 3:20, Revelation 19:9

Topics: "Salvation Invitation", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

George Whitefield preaches on the parable of the great supper, emphasizing the urgency and importance of responding to God's invitation to salvation. He highlights the excuses people make to avoid accepting the gospel call, such as being preoccupied with worldly matters or lacking spiritual awareness. Whitefield urges both sinners and believers to come to the feast of salvation, emphasizing God's abundant grace and the need for continual renewal of faith. He warns of the consequences of rejecting God's offer and encourages all to partake in the spiritual banquet prepared by Christ.

Transcript

Luke 14:22-24, "And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the high-ways, and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper."

Though here is a large and solemn assembly, yet I suppose you are all convinced, that you are not to live in this world always. May I not take it for granted, that even the most profane amongst you, do in your hearts believe, what the sacred oracles have most clearly revealed, "That as it is appointed for all men once to die, so after death comes the judgment?" Yes, I know you believe, that nothing is more certain, than that we are to "appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil." And, however hard the saying may seem to you at the first hearing, yet I cannot help informing you, that I am thoroughly persuaded, as many will be driven from that judgment-seat, with a "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire," for pursuing things in themselves lawful, out of a wrong principle, and in too intense a degree; as for drunkenness, adultery, fornication, or any other gross enormity [atrocious, outrage, depravity] whatsoever. Bas as the world is, blessed be God, there are great numbers yet left amongst us, who either through the restraints of a religious education, or self-love, and outward reputation, abstain from gross sin themselves,

and look with detestation and abhorrence upon others, who indulge themselves in it. But then, through an over-eager pursuit after the things of sense and time, their souls are insensibly lulled into a spiritual slumber, and by degrees become as dead to God, and as deaf to all the gracious invitations of the gospel, as the most abandoned prodigals. It is remarkable, therefore, that our Savior, knowing how desperately wicked and treacherous the heart of man was, in this, as well as other respects, after he had cautioned his disciples, and us in them, to "take heed that their hearts were not at any time overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness," immediately adds, "and the cares (the immoderate anxious cares) of this life." For they are of a distracting, intoxicating nature, and soon overcharge and weigh down the hearts of the children of men. To prevent or remedy this evil, our Lord, during the time of his tabernacling here below, spake many parables, but not one more pertinent, not one, in which the freeness of the gospel-call, and the frivolous pretenses men frame to excuse themselves from embracing it, and the dreadful doom they incur by so doing, are more displayed, or set off in livelier colors, than that to which the words of the text refer. "And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled: For I say unto you, that none of those that were bidden shall taste of my supper."

In order to have a clear view of the occasion, scope, and contents of the parable, to which these words belong, it is necessary for us to look back to the very beginning of this chapter. "And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread, on the Sabbath day, that they watched him." The person here spoken of, as going into this Pharisee's house, is our blessed Savior. For as he came eating and drinking, agreeable to his character, he was free, courteous and affable [friendly, good-natured] to all; and therefore though it was on a Sabbath-day, he accepted an invitation, and went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread, notwithstanding he knew the Pharisees were his professed enemies, and that they watched him, hoping to find some occasion to upbraid him, either for his discourse or behavior. If the Pharisee into whose house our Lord went, was one of this stamp, his invitation bespeaks him to be a very ill man, and may serve to teach us, that much rancor and heart-enmity against Jesus Christ, may be concealed and cloaked under a great and blazing profession of religion. However, our Savior was more than a match for all his enemies, and by accepting this invitation, hath warranted his ministers and disciples, to comply with the like invitations, and converse freely about the things of God, though those who invite them, may not have real religion at heart. For how knowest thou, O man, but thou mayest drop something, that may benefit their souls, and make them religious indeed? And supposing they should watch thee, watch thou unto prayer, whilst thou art in their company, and that same Jesus, who went into this Pharisee's house, and was so faithful and edifying in his conversation when there, will enable thee to go and do likewise.

That our Lord's conversation was not trifling, but such as tended to the use of edifying, and that he behaved among the guests as a faithful physician, rather than as a careless, indifferent companion, is evident from the 7th verse of this chapter, where we are told, that "he marked how they chose the chief rooms;" or, to speak in our common way, were desirous of sitting at the upper end of the table. And whether we think of it or not, the Lord Jesus takes notice of our behavior, even when we are going to sit down only at our common meals.

Would to God, all that make a profession of real Christianity, considered this well! Religion then would not be so much confined to church, or meeting, but be brought home to our private houses, and many needless unchristian compliments be prevented. For (with grief I speak it) is it not too true, that abundance of professors love, and are too fond of the uppermost places in houses, as well as synagogues? This was what our Lord blamed in the guests where he now was. He marked, he took notice, he looked before he

spake (as we should always do, if we would speak to the purpose) how they chose out the chief rooms.

Therefore, though they were rich in this world's goods, and were none of his guests, yet unwilling to suffer the least sin upon them, or lost any opportunity of giving instruction, he gave them a lecture upon humility, saying unto them, or directing his discourse to all in general, though probably he spake to one in particular, who sat near him, and whom, it may be, he took notice of, as more than ordinarily solicitous in choosing a chief room, or couch, on which they lay at meals, after the custom of the Romans; "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding (which seems to intimate that this was a wedding-feast) sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship (or respect) in the presence of them who sit at meat with thee." O glorious example of faithfulness and love to souls! How ought ministers especially, to copy after their blessed Master, and, with simplicity and godly sincerity, mildly and opportunely rebuke the faults of the company they are in, though superior to them in outward circumstances?

What rightly informed person, after reading this passage, can think they teach right and agreeable to the word of God in this respect, who say, we must not, at least need not, reprove natural men? Surely such doctrine cometh not from above! For are we not commanded, in any wise, to reprove our neighbor (whether he be a child of God or no) and not to suffer sin upon him? Is it not more than probable, that all these guests were natural men? And yet our Lord reproved them. Help us then, O Savior, in this and every other instance of thy moral conduct, to walk as thou hast set us an example!

Neither did our Lord stop here; but observing that none but the rich, the mighty, and the noble, were called to the feast, he took occasion also from thence, to give even his host (for the best return we make our friends for their kindness, is to be faithful to their souls) one of the chief Pharisees, a wholesome piece of advice. "Then said he also to him that bade him, when thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee. For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just!" Thus did our Lord entertain the company. Words spoken in such due season, how good are they! Would Christ's followers thus exert themselves, and, when in company, begin some useful discourse for their great master, they know not what good they might do, and how many might be influenced, by their good example, to second them in it.

An instance of this we have in the 14th verse: "And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Happy they who shall be recompensed at that resurrection of the just, which thou hast been speaking of. A very pertinent saying this! every way suitable to persons sitting down to eat bread on earth, which we should never do, without talking of, and longing for that time, when we shall sit down and eat bread in the kingdom of heaven. This opened to our Lord a fresh topic of conversation, and occasioned the parable, which is to be the more immediate subject of your present meditation. As though he had said to the person that spoke last, Thou sayest right: blessed are they indeed, who shall sit down to eat bread in the kingdom of God: But alas! most men, especially you Pharisees, act as if you did not believe this; and therefore he said unto him, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many;" by the certain man making a great supper, we

are to understand God the Father, who has made provision for perishing souls, by the obedience and death of his beloved Son Christ Jesus. This provision is here represented under the character of a supper, because the Caena or supper, among the ancients, was their grand meal: Men could never have made such provision for themselves, or angels for them. No, our salvation is all from God, from the beginning to the end. He made it, and not we ourselves; and it is wholly owing to the divine wisdom, and not our own, that we are become God's people, and the sheep of his pasture. This provision for perishing souls, may be justly called GREAT, because there is rich and ample provision made in the gospel for a great many souls. For however Christ's flock may be but a little flock, when asunder, yet when they come all together, they will be a multitude which no man can number. And it is especially called GREAT, because it was purchased at so great a price, the price of Christ's most precious blood. And therefore, when the apostle would exhort the Christians to glorify God in their souls and bodies, he makes use of this glorious motive, "That they were bought with a price." He does not say what price, but barely a PRICE, emphatically so called; as though all the prices in the world were nothing (as indeed they are not) when compared to this price of Christ's most precious blood.

For these reasons, Jesus said in the parable, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many, and sent his servant at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready." He bade many; the eternal God took the Jews for his peculiar people, under the Mosaic dispensation; and by types, shadows, and prophesies of the Old Testament, invited them to partake of the glorious privileges of the gospel. "But at supper-time," in the fullness of time, which God the Father had decreed from eternity, in the evening of the world (for which reason the gospel times are called the last times) "he sent his servant," Christ his Son, here called his servant, because acting as Mediator he was inferior to the Father; therefore says the prophet Isaiah, "Behold my servant whom I have chosen:" "to say to them that were bidden," to the professing Jews, called by St. John, "his own," that is, his peculiar professing people ÷ with this message, "Come;" repent and believe the gospel. Nothing is required on man's part, but to come, or accept of the gospel offer. It is not according to the old covenant, "Do and live;" but only "come, believe, and thou shalt be saved." All things are ready. Nothing is wanting on God's part. "All things are now ready." There seems to be a particular emphasis to be put upon NOE, implying, this was an especial season of grace, and God was now exerting his last efforts, to save lost man. Well then, if the great God be at so great an expense, to make so great a supper, for perishing creatures, and sends so great a person as his own Son, in the form of a servant, to invite them to come to it; one would imagine, that all who heard these glad tidings, should readily say, Lord, lo we come. But instead of this, we are told, "They all, (the greatest part of the Jews) with one consent began to make excuse." Conscience told them they ought to come, and in all probability they had some faint desire to come; and they had nothing, as we hear of, to object either against the person who prepared the supper, or the person that invited them, or the entertainment itself; neither do we hear that they treated either with contempt, as is the custom of too many in the days wherein we live. In all probability, they acknowledged all was very good, and that it was kind in that certain man, to send them such an invitation. But being very busy, and as they thought very lawfully engaged, they begun to make excuse.

But the excuses they made, rendered their refusal inexcusable. "The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it." Thou fool, buy a piece of ground, and then go see it! A prudent man would have gone and seen the ground first, and bought it afterwards. Why must he needs go? At least, why must he needs go NOW? The land was his own, could he not therefore have accepted the invitation today, and gone and seen his estate, or plantation, on the morrow? As he had bought it, he need not fear losing his bargain, by anothers buying it from him. But notwithstanding all this, there is a

needs must for his going, and therefore says he, "I pray thee, have me excused," and improve thy interest with thy master in my behalf. This was a bad excuse.

The second was rather worse. For what says the evangelist, verse 19? "And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them:" One, it seems, had been buying an estate; another, cattle, to stock an estate already bought; and both equally foolish in making their bargains. For this second had bought five yoke of oxen, which must needs cost them a considerable sum, perhaps all he had in the world, and now he must go and prove them. A wise dealer would have proved the oxen first, and bought them afterwards: But our Savior speaks this, to show us, that we will trust one another, nay I may add, the devil himself, more than we will trust God.

The excuse which the third makes, is worst of all. "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Had he said, I will not come, he had spoken the real sentiments of his heart: for it is not so much men's impotency, as their want of a will, and inclination, that keeps them from the gospel-feast. But why cannot he come? He has "married a wife." Has he so? Why then, by all means he should come. For the supper to which he was invited, as it should seem, was a wedding-supper, and would have saved him the trouble of a nuptial entertainment. It was a great supper, and consequently there was provision enough for him, and his bride too. And it was made by a great man, who sent out his servant to bid many, so that he need not have doubted of meeting with a hearty welcome, though he should bring his wife with him. Or supposing his wife was unwilling to come, yet as the husband is the head of the wife, he ought to have laid his commands on her, to accompany him. For we cannot do better for our yoke-fellows, than to bring them to the gospel-feast. Or, supposing after all, she would not be prevailed upon, he ought to have gone without her: for "those that have wives, must be as though they had none;" and we must not let carnal affection get such an ascendancy over us, as to be kept thereby from spiritual entertainments. Adam paid dear for hearkening to the voice of his wife: and sometimes, unless we forsake wives, as well as houses and lands, we cannot be the Lord's disciples.

This then was the reception the servant met with, and such were the excuses, and answers, that were sent back. And what was the consequence? "So that servant came (no doubt with a sorrowful heart) and showed his Lord these things." However little it be thought of, yet ministers must show the Lord, what success their ministry meets with. We must how it to our Lord here. We must spread the case before him in prayer. We must show it to our Lord hereafter, before the general assembly of the whole world.

But how dreadful is it, when ministers are obliged to go upon their knees, crying, "O! my leanness, my leanness!" and Elias-like, to intercede as it were against those, to whom they would not only have imparted the gospel, but even their own lives. It is a heart-breaking consideration. But thus it must be; "The servant came and showed the Lord these things;" so must we. Well, and what says the Lord? We are told, verse 21st, that "the master of the house was angry?" Not with the servant: for though Israel be not gathered, yet shall Christ be glorious; and faithful ministers shall be rewarded, whether people obey the gospel or not.

"We are a sweet savor unto God, whether the world be a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death." The master of the house therefore was angry, not with the servant, but with these worldly-minded, pleasure-taking refusers of his gracious invitation; who, in all probability, went to see and stock their estates, and attend upon their brides, not doubting, but their excuses would be taken, because they were lawfully employed. And, indeed, in one sense, their excuses were accepted.

For I do not hear that they were ever invited any more. God took them at their word, though they would not take him at his. They begged to be excused, and they were excused, as we shall see in the sequel of this parable. Let us not therefore harden our hearts, as in the day of provocation; "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." But must the feast want guests? No, if they cannot, or will not come, others shall, and will. The master of the house therefore being angry, sent the servant upon a second errand.

"Go out quickly into the streets, and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." Every word bespeaks a spirit of resentment and importunity. Go out quickly, make no delay, dread no attempt or danger, into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither, not only call them, but bring them in (for the master here, to encourage the servant, assures him of success) the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. This was fulfilled, when Jesus Christ, after the gospel was rejected by the Jews, went and invited the Gentiles, and when the publicans and harlots took the kingdom of God by a holy violence, whilst the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees rejected the kingdom of God against themselves.

This was also a home reproof of the rich Pharisee, at whose house the Lord Jesus was, as well as a cutting lesson to the other guests. For our Savior would hereby show them, that God took a quite different method from his host, and was not above receiving the poor, and halt, and blind, and maimed, to the gospel supper, though he had called none such to sit down at his table. Whether the guests resented it or not, we are not told. But if they were not quite blind, both host and guests might easily see that the parable was spoken against them. But to proceed,

The servant again returns, but with a more pleasing answer than before, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room." The words bespeak the servant to be full of joy at the thoughts of the success he had met with. None can tell, but those who experience it, what comfort ministers have in seeing their labors blest. "Now I live, (says the apostle) if you stand fast in the Lord. Ye are our joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus." "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded.

The poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind, have been called, and have obeyed the summons, and I have brought them with me; yet, Lord, thy house, and thy supper is so great, there is room for more. Hereby he insinuated that he wanted to be employed again, in calling more souls; and the more we do, the more may we do for God: "To him that hath, shall be given;" and present success is a great encouragement to future diligence. Such hints are pleasing to our Savior. He delights to see his ministers ready for new work, and waiting for fresh orders.

"The Lord, therefore, we are told, ver. 23, said unto his servant, (the same servant,) Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled; 24. For I say unto you, that none of those who are bidden, shall taste of my supper." O cutting words to those that sat at meat, if they had hearts to make the application! But glad tidings of great joy to the publicans, harlots, and Gentiles, who were rejected by the proud Pharisees, as aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise!

This was fulfilled, when our Lord sent the apostles, not only into the streets and lanes of the city, and places bordering upon Jerusalem and Judea; but when he gave them a commission to go out into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, Gentile as well a Jew; and not only gave them a command, but blessed their labors with such success, that three thousand were converted in one day. And I am not without hopes that it will be still further fulfilled, by the calling of some of you home this day.

For however this parable was spoken originally to the Jews, and upon a particular occasion, as at a feast, yet it is applicable to us, and to our children, and to as many as are afar off; yea, to as many as the Lord our God shall call. It gives a sanction, methinks, to preaching in the fields, and other places besides the synagogues; and points out the reception the gospel meets with in these days, in such a lively manner, that one would think it had a particular reference to the perfect age.

For is it not too, too plain, that the gospel-offers, and gospel-grace, have been slighted, and made light of, by many professors of this generation? We have been in the churches, telling them, again and again, that God has made a great supper (and has invited many, even them) and sent us by his providence and his spirit, "to say unto them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved." But the generality of the laity have made light of it, they have given us the hearing, but are too busy in their farms and their merchandises, their marrying and giving in marriage, to come and be blessed in the Lord of life.

We have told them, again and again, that we do not want them to hide themselves from the world, but to teach them how they may live in, and yet not be of it. But all will not do. Many of the clergy also (like the letter-learned Scribes and Pharisees in our Savior's time) reject the kingdom of God against themselves, and deny us the use of the pulpits, for no other reason but because we preach the doctrine of justification in the sight of God by faith alone, and invite sinners to come and taste of the gospel feast freely, without money and without price.

Whatever they may think, we are persuaded, the great master of the house is angry with them, for being angry with us without a cause. He therefore now, by his providence, bids us "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind," or call in the publicans and harlots, the common cursers and swearers, and Sabbath-breakers, and adulterers, who, perhaps, never entered a church door, or heard that Jesus Christ died for such sinners as they are. We, through grace, have obeyed the command, we have gone out, though exposed to such contempt for so doing, and, blessed be God, our labor has not been in vain in the Lord. For many have been made willing in the day of God's power; and, we would speak it with humility, we can go cheerfully to our Savior, and say, "It is done, Lord, as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room." He is therefore pleased, in spite of all opposition from men or devils, to continue, and renew, and enlarge our commission; he hath sent us literally into the highways and hedges; and, I trust, has given us a commission to compel sinners to come. For, could we speak with the tongues of men and angels, yet if the Lord did not attend the word with his power, and sweetly inclined men's wills to comply with the gospel-call, we should be as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. But this we believe our Savior will do, for his house must be filled: every soul for whom he has shed his blood, shall finally be saved, "and all that the Father hath given him, shall come unto him, and whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out." This comforted our Lord, when his gospel was rejected by the Jews. As though he had said, Well, tho' you despise the offers of my grace, yet I shall not shed my blood in vain; for all that the Father hath given me shall come unto me.

Supported by this consideration, I am not ashamed to come out this day into the highways and hedges, and to confess that my business is to call the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind, self-condemned, helpless sinners, to the marriage-feast of the supper of the Lamb. My cry is, Come, believe on the Lord Jesus; throw yourselves at the footstool of his mercy, and you shall be saved; for all things are now ready. God the Father is ready, God the Son is ready, God the Holy Ghost is ready; the blessed angels above are ready, and the blessed saints below are ready, to welcome you to the

gospel-feast.

A perfect and everlasting righteousness is now wrought out by Jesus Christ. God, now, upon honorable terms, can acquit the guilty. God can now be just, and yet justify the ungodly. "For he hath made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The fatted calf is now killed, and "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us." Come, sinners, and feed upon him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving. For Jesus Christ's sake, do not with one consent begin to make excuse.

Do not let a piece of ground, five yoke of oxen, or even a wife, keep you from this great supper. These you may enjoy, as the gifts of God, and make use of them for the Mediator's glory, and yet be present at the gospel feast. True and undefiled religion does not take away, but rather greatly enhances the comforts of life; and our Lord did not pray that we should be taken out of the world, but "that we should be delivered from the evil of it." O then that you would all, with one consent, say, Lo! we come.

Assure yourselves here is provision enough. For it is a great supper. In our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. And though a great God makes the supper, yet he is as good and condescending as he is great. Though he be the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, yet he will dwell with the humble and contrite heart, even with the man that trembleth at his word. Neither can you complain for want of room; "for yet there is room. In our Father's house are many mansions."

If it was not so, our Savior would have told us. The grace of Christ is as rich, as free, and as powerful as ever. He is "the same yesterday, today, and for ever." He is full of grace and truth, and out of his fullness, all that come to him may receive grace for grace. He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. He willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should believe and live. Come then, all ye halt, poor, maimed, and blind sinners; take comfort, the Lord Jesus has sent his servant to call you.

It is now supper-time, and a day of uncommon grace. The day may be far spent. Haste, therefore, and away to the supper of the Lamb. If you do not come, I know the master will be angry. And who can stand before him when he is angry? "Harden not therefore your hearts, as in the day of provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Do not provoke the Lord to say, "None of those that were bidden shall taste of my supper." O dreadful words! Much more is implied in them than is expressed.

It is the same with that in the psalms, "I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest." And if you do not enter into God's rest, nor taste of Christ's supper, you must lift up your eyes in torments, where you will have no rest, and must sup with the damned devils for ever more.

Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade you to haste away, and make no more frivolous excuses. For there is no excuse against believing. Perhaps you say, You call to the halt, and maimed, and blind, and poor. But if we are halt, and maimed, how can we come?: if we are blind, how can we see our way? If we are poor, how can we expect admission to so great a table? Ah! Happy are ye, if you are sensible, that you are halt and maimed. For if you feel yourselves so, and are lamenting it, who knows but whilst I am speaking, God may send his Spirit with the word, and fetch you home? Though you are blind, Jesus has eye salve to anoint you. Though you are poor, yet you are welcome to this rich feast. It cost Jesus Christ a great price, but you shall have it gratis. For such as you was it designed: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Rich, self-righteous, self-sufficient sinners, I know, will scorn both the feast and its great provider. They have done so already, therefore the Lord ha sent us into the highways and hedges, to bring such poor souls as you are in. Venture then, my dear friends, and honor God, by taking him at his word. Come to the marriage-feast. Believe me, you will there partake of

most delicious fare.

Tell me, ye that have been made to taste that the Lord is gracious, will you not recommend this feast to all? Are you not; whilst I am speaking, ready to cry out, Come all ye that are without, come ye, obey the call, for we have sat under the Redeemer's shadow with great delight, and his fruit has been pleasant to our taste. Whilst I am speaking, does not the fire kindle, do not your hearts burn with a desire that others may come and be blessed too? If you are Christians indeed, I know you will be thus minded, and the language of your hearts will be, Lord, whilst he is calling, let thy Spirit compel them to come in. O that the Lord may say, Amen! And why should we doubt? Surely our Savior will not let me complain this day that I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nought. Methinks I see many desiring to come. O how shall I compel you to come forwards. I will not use fire or sword, as the Papists do, by terribly perverting this text of scripture. But I will tell you of the love of God, the love of God in Christ, and surely that must compel you, that must constrain you, whether you will or not. Sinners, my heart is enlarged towards you. I could fill my mouth with arguments. Consider the greatness of the God who makes the supper. Consider the greatness of the price, wherewith it was purchased. Consider the greatness of the provision made for you. What would you have more? Consider God's infinite condescension, in calling you now, when you might have been in hell, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And that you might be without excuse, he has sent his servant into the highways and hedges to invite you there. O that you tasted what I do now! I am sure you would not want arguments to induce you to come in: No, you would fly to the gospel-feast, as doves to the windows.

But, poor souls! many of you, perhaps, are not hungry. You do not feel yourselves halt, or maimed, or blind, and therefore you have no relish for this spiritual entertainment. Well, be not angry with me for calling you; be not offended if I weep over you, because you know not the day of your visitation. If I must appear in judgment as a swift witness against you, I must. But that thought chills my blood! I cannot bear it; I feel that I could lay down my life for you. But I am not willing to go without you. What say you, my dear friends? I would put the question to you once more, Will you taste of Christ's supper, or will you not? You shall all be welcome. There is milk at this feast for babes, as well as meat for strong men, and for persons of riper years. There is room and provision for high and low, rich and poor, one with another; and our Savior will thank you for coming. Amazing condescension! Astonishing love! The thought of it quite overcomes me. Help me, help me, O believers, to bless and praise him.

And O! that this love may excite us to come afresh to him, as though we had never come before! For, though we have been often feasted, yet our souls will starve, unless we renew our acts of faith, and throw ourselves, as lost, undone sinners, continually at the feet of Christ. Feeding upon past experiences will not satisfy our souls, any more than what we did eat yesterday will sustain our bodies to day. No, believers must look for fresh influences of divine grace, and beg of the Lord to water them every moment. The parable therefore speaks to saints as well as sinners. Come ye to the marriage-feast; you are as welcome now as ever. And may God set your souls a longing for that time when we shall sit down and eat bread in the kingdom of heaven! There we shall have full draughts of divine love, and enjoy the glorious Emanuel for ever more. Even so, Lord Jesus, Amen.

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