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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday Evening, 5th January 1964

"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." Luke 14:23.

This is one of the many parables that the Lord spake which full of vital instruction. This parable was in answer to a question. One of them which sat at meat with Him heard these things and said unto Him, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God;" and this parable is the response to that observation. It is very evident that the one who made that observation had his heart touched, his eyes opened to see the significance of what the Lord was teaching them. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" and it was as though the Lord responded and said, "Well, I will show you who it is that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Then He propounded this parable unto them. The parable of the great supper; A type of the church of God here below, and a type of the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven. Very sacred! In Solomon's Song we have the intimation of the same King, the same Lord bringing His people into the banqueting house when the King sitteth at the table; "My spikenard giveth forth the smell thereof." and it will be a mercy if in any measure the Lord would condescend to come here as we are assembled according to the pattern of His Word, and come among us, and sit at the table as our King, the King of Heaven, the King of Glory, the King of Saints, the King in Zion. If so, then we shall be led a little into the riches of the glory, of the authority and power of that kingdom in our hearts.

Well, there were some that when they were bidden made all kinds of excuses. This may refer doubtless it does in the first place, to the Jews. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." But the ultimate design of this parable respects all of His dear people whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. I know we sing, and I believe there are those that sing it from their hearts,

*I love to meet among them now,
Before Thy gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all. (Gadsby's 938)*

It is a great thing if that is our real experience. Would we make excuses? Here in the first place is set before us the provision that God has made in the Church, in the Gospel; Everything without exception that a sinner can need for his salvation. O what a provision it is! You can taste it; faith will distinguish the heavenly nature of it, the life, the vital life that is in it. It is inimitable. Whatever you may consider in a natural way, the best things of this world, its brightest entertainments and its greatest riches and all that the world calls good and great, you will distinctly realise that there is death in it all; and it is a blessing to feel - not to have a mere notion, but to feel the distinction between things that are natural and things that are spiritual.

"But they with one consent began to make excuse." Well, I can say that my case is such, my needs are so deep, my destitution so universal, my condition so wrecked and ruined, that I would make no excuse and cannot some of you feel that and respond to the invitation -

*Lol glad I come and Thou blest Lamb,
Shalt take me to Thee as I am;
Nothing but sin I Thee can give;
Nothing but love shall I receive. (Gadsby's 144)*

O be thankful then if you, through grace, are not among those that make excuse! We remember the time when we did. Glad enough I was when I was a boy, if I could make some excuse not to go to the Chapel. But do you remember the time when in your experience you became an outcast, in the highways and hedges, ragged and barefoot, hunger-bitten? It is a real experience and this would be the case and condition of the richest man in the country if he was called by grace. He would realise that his righteousnesses were but filthy rags. It is to such that the Gospel is a joyful sound. It was such who at the sound of the trumpet came to Mount Zion: "the outcasts and those that were ready to perish." and when we are brought into such a condition in reality, O how the opposite does shine in the eyes of faith!

We tried to speak, this morning, of stretching forth unto those things that are before; and there is a sense of our unworthiness and our state in the ruin of the fall, together with some unfolding by the Spirit of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, by which faith stretches out after that that is before and presses toward it. 'And the servant said, lord it is done as thou hast commanded and yet there is room.' There is room because, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to Me." They will all come. Some sooner or some later, and O what guests they are! The Lord intimates what kind of guests they would be, He says, "But when thou makest a feast call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind;" and you can see some of those guests. Mary would be there. That Mary who was a great sinner and that Mary that took an alabaster box of ointment - that was the spikenard. But the savour, the sweet odour did not flow out until the box was broken. To have repentance, faith, love, hope in the heart, we must have a broken and a contrite heart. Mary would be one of the guests.

The leper would be there. He came kneeling unto Him and beseeching Him, but not now a leper, but cleansed. That poor maniac would be one of the guests, who besought the Lord when he was healed that he might abide with Him, "But He suffered him not saying, go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee and had compassion upon thee." He would be there.

That dear woman that pressed through the crowd with an issue of blood, her life-blood ebbing away, that touched His garment and received healing, she would be there; she would make no excuses. Shall we be there? Have we been gathered here from the highways and hedges, delivered from the waste howling wilderness, delivered from the domination of our own depraved nature and the lusts of the flesh'?

'And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded and yet there is room.' There will be room until the last one is gathered. I know some of you may feel; Room, yes - but is there room for me? Well, are you the character? "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Have you had that preparation for the feast? Are you starving, hungry, thirsty, ragged, poor, naked, miserable? Can you say - not parrot like, but from your very experience:

*No help in self I find,
And yet have sought it well;
The native treasure of my mind
Is sin, and death, and hell. (Gadsby's 739)*

And yet, looking out from that, you see a glorious righteousness and eternal life and heaven.

'And the Lord said unto the servant, go out into the -highways and hedges.' And the prodigal would be there, who wasted his father's substance in riotous living. All repenting sinners will be there. 'Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in.' Well, the only persuasion that will compel poor sinners to come in is the power of divine grace. I know that there will be excuses even from those who feel their need of all that Christ is and the provision that He has made. Some of you may make excuse and say: 'I am not worthy to go; I have wasted the Father's substance with riotous living; I feel that my spot is not the spot of His children. I feel that it would be utter presumption for me to go in. They are the children of the heavenly King in there, the King reigns supreme in there, I have no right to go in.' 'Compel them to come in.' And what compels? - The Gospel. "The Gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Compel them to come in, for the provision is for the poor.

*Thou art coming to a King;
Large petitions with thee bring. (Gadsby's 379)*

There is a fullness there, bread and to spare in the Father's house. There is a change of raiment there, the best robe to put on the worst sinner and only the worst of sinners will have it brought forth and put on them. 'Compel them to come in.'

The very contents of the Gospel has sacred attraction, a compelling force in it, and therefore, I feel warranted to say that those of you who are being taught of the Spirit, who are here and who believe in the Word of God as you do believe in it; and who seek those favours that belong to His dear people because you are compelled to. It is not a question of opinion. Why do I say this? because I believe what I do believe and preach what I do preach because I am compelled to. There is nothing else that can reach to the uttermost. People make a very great mistake and they suppose that because we desire to walk separate from the world and its things, that we meet together because we are good people and the best of people; but the very opposite is true. We are compelled to come, compelled to believe in free and sovereign grace, because everything else would leave us where it finds us. So it is a mercy if your religion is compelled upon you by the teaching of the Holy Spirit of your desperate case apart from Christ. I feel that it cannot be described better than the Word of God to that Church at Laodicea; "Poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked."

'And the lord said unto the servant, go out into the highways and hedges.' O it is good to find poor sinners in a perishing condition! Go to find sinners that are lost. It is not generally so, even among those that profess the truth. We shall never be saved until we are lost; and therefore, it is a very important part of the work of grace that one is brought into a knowledge of their lost state and condition. Grace does not produce that lost condition, conviction of sin does not create sin; it simply discovers it, reveals it and when the light shines a poor sinner sees himself exactly as he is. O in what

deception blind sinners live! "But when Thou dost rebuke a man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth" so it brings that sinner to seek everything in Christ, that he is All and in all. That Christ is all life, all holiness, all grace, all sanctification, has a fullness of infinite merit, of divine and heavenly power, of infinite wisdom; and this is made available for the ignorant and those that are out of the way. O to be brought in! 'Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in.'

You very rarely find in the Scriptures that there is a direct reference to election. Not that election is submerged, but for the encouragement of poor trembling sinners, the fruits and effects of election manifested in characters does give more encouragement to His dear people. As for instance, "Be strong and of a good courage, all ye that hope in the Lord." If you hope in the Lord then you have a warrant to be of good courage - "And He shall strengthen your heart;" and so here the qualification for the church and all the provision that is made in it, is what is so simply spoken of in the hymn -

*All the fitness He requireth,
Is to feel your need of Him,
This he gives you,
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam. (Gadsby's 723)*

- and this need He gives you.

'And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in for yet there is room.' You remember that when the vessels that were to be filled with oil, when the last vessel was filled the oil stayed and so when the last elect vessel of mercy is gathered in unto Christ, then the house will be full, but this will remain true until the end of time; "Lord it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room." 'Compel them to come in.'

Well, I believe that there are those here who have long been seeking, who have long brought forward their own universal emptiness and unworthiness and sinnership; it makes them suitable for the provision that is in the banqueting house. The best of provisions for the worst of people. I think we have expressed that before; but there is something so blessed in it. Take the whole of salvation, and the Lord Jesus Christ who is the author of eternal salvation and all the blessed ingredients of salvation that are in Him, and all His Person and work and sufferings and death; and the highest gift that God could give, His only-begotten Son; and all the benefit that derives from Him - the very best for the very worst of sinners. And it comes down, "drop-down ye heavens from above and let the earth bring forth righteousness." O the Father did not only not spare His Son, " but delivered Him up for us all, and with Him also freely gave us all things" that accompany salvation; all things that pertain unto life and godliness, all the riches of His grace, all the glory of His person and that poor sinners can be brought into eternal union with Him and made "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." Heirs to an inheritance in heaven, incorruptible. All this comes down, down from heaven, and swallows up sin and death and hell for and in His dear people. 'Compel them to come,' and when they hear this sound, this joyful sound, it has an irresistible power, so suitable. 'Compel them to come in.'

O that the Holy Ghost would compel some of those that are hovering around the windows of His grace who can truly say, "I love the windows of Thy grace." I believe that it is intentional that in that narrative of the dove that when she could find no rest for the soul of her foot, she came to the windows of the ark. She did not fly straight in, If she had there would have been no need for Noah to have put forth his hand and take hold of her and I believe there are some poor sinners here in the highways and hedges, longing, cold, hungry, thirsty, that are hovering like that dove, to find no satisfaction anywhere else; 'Compel them to come in.' O that the Holy Ghost would put forth His glorious hand of grace and take hold of those poor sinners and bring them in unto Himself into the ark Christ Jesus! Find in Him a banqueting house, 'and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.' So that he Lord uses means for the ingathering of His people.

That command in the 50th Psalm will have authority while the world stands. "Gather my saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." Really, virtually, that is just what the Lord Jesus did, as the Father's Servant, He gathered the saints together in His work, in His doing and in His dying. But ministerially by the Holy Spirit, His saints are led about and instructed, they are brought to hunger in order to prove them "to know what was in their heart" and to bring them to know what was in the heart of the Lord Jesus. O this gracious compelling, this persuasion. You could never have restrained the prodigal from going back to his father's house; no power could have restrained him. When he went away there was no power that would cause him to abide in the father's house, but now the power of divine grace exercised through his sense of dire need, his perishing, despairing condition as an outcast, was such that nothing could keep him away. And each, in their own measure will know both sides.

O you will have reason to bless God through time and eternity if you have the experience of the prodigal. Some have gone away from this chapel like the prodigal went away and have come back to it as the prodigal came back to the father's house; he was compelled to. "I will arise and go to my father... there is bread enough and to spare and I am starving with hunger, and I will say unto him 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight and am no more worthy to be called thy son,' that is how they come in - with weeping, with supplication, with repentance; but the father did not let him finish. Before he could finish his confession, he said to the servant, to the same servant, "Bring forth the very best robe and put it on him." Nothing but the best would do. Ah, some who are ignorant of the immutable love and divine mercy and free grace would have said, well, anything will do for him, look at the way he has lived; and look at his unfaithfulness; see how he has requited his father by wasting his substance with riotous living, anything will do for him. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him."

O, if there is some poor seeking sinner hovering round the windows of His grace, may the Holy Spirit make this parable and this Word effective in the heart! You cannot come too filthy to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness - and that is in the house.

Amen.