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108

Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Wednesday evening, 26th. July 1933

Text: Luke 14. v. 23

"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."

God made a covenant with Israel, called the covenant of promise. He gave the promise to Abraham of the seed of the woman. He gave them good laws, great promises, prophets rising up early and teaching them, and they were looking for the promised Messiah. The rebellion of that nation brought them great adversities, captivities, and God after Malachi's prophesy left them without any direct or distinct teaching by any of His servants until John the Baptist. They were looking for a great Messiah who should deliver them from that hateful, hated yoke of Roman dominion but when the Son of man came, the promised seed, a poor man, so poor that women whom He had blessed had to minister to Him of their substance, so poor that He had not where to lay His head, they rejected Him and their house was left unto them desolate and remains so until to-day. Then the Lord according to the good counsel and pleasure of His will, turned to the Gentiles after the day of Pentecost and when persecution scattered the Evangelists, the Apostles, they went everywhere, preaching the gospel. Three thousand souls on the day of Pentecost. Quickly that number was augmented to five thousand. The Lord gathered quickly to begin and establish His kingdom - Gentiles. The supper which the Jews declined, rejected, that is to say the blessed Son of God. Now the Lord says - I will have these beggars. These maimed people; these lame people; poor and blind. His servants went, according to the divine command, and brought in many. They went into the streets and lanes, which may represent the various districts, countries, places into which God sends His servants and they gathered and brought in the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind; and these people did not fill the house. It has not been filled as yet with Gentiles, but it is near the end of the present time of God's goodness and grace. Bring in hither the poor.

Now spiritually, this poor person represents one under conviction of sin. He feels his poverty, he sees his wretched condition. He is under conviction of his transgressions. His riches, morality, anything and everything that he had as a man, a fallen man - now he is stripped of them. Nothing can he call his own. House, land, father, mother, brother, sister, wife, all gone as to any recommendation before God, or of any possession of which he may boast. He is poor and he answers in measure to that word in Matthew - "Blessed are the poor in spirit." This poor man is brought into the house. He is made to come. The maimed - a maimed person is a person deprived of some limb, not only lame or halt but he lacks a member of his body and these poor maimed creatures are sought out by the Lord. The halt - who have halted between two opinions and now halt as to whether there is mercy

for such; and the blind - who know not how to find the city, and these were brought in. Now said the servant, yet there is room. 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." The highways and hedges represent the places in the wilderness to which God's servants are sent. People tell us we do not preach according to scripture, to every creature. But God knows, when He sends a servant of His to any locality. It is his business when there and while there, to preach to all who come to hear him and that is his fulfilment of the word preach to every creature.

What I want to notice (this evening) is this - "compel them to come in." Very different this from the easy religion of the present day. What need is there for compulsion? What reason would these poor people, maimed people, blind people, when a great house and a sumptuous feast are told to them, what need is there for any compulsion of any kind to be brought to bear upon them. Some of you will have your answers immediately. The poor man says - I am not fit to go to that great house, I am utterly unworthy and though the invitation is given, I can hardly think that I am intended. I am too poor; I am ragged; I am not fit to be seen; I am not worthy of that house - that is an objection. It arises from his felt poverty; it arises from his sense of sinfulness; from his feeling that he is not fit for the presence of God; too base; he has not a good thought to mention; not a good desire according to his judgement; not a good feeling, just entirely poor. Nothing that anybody could call wealth does this man possess. Now what is the compulsion; the compelling that he stands in need of? It is this; the movement, the operation, the power of the Holy Ghost in his heart. And that operation; that power, I will speak of. The operation is the opening of the eyes of his understanding, that he may have some understanding of free and sovereign grace, that move him to say, "if free grace why not for me?" If free grace means no money, then I may answer to that. If a free feast is given, for hungry people, I am hungry! If hungry people are asked to come to a feast without payment, then that suits me! If this feast is provided, by One who can afford it, who has prepared it, who has sent an invitation to one to come to it, then perhaps I may put in a claim, for I am poor. It needs, in the second place, the sweet compelling power of the spirit of faith, of the spirit of grace and of supplication. None can tell but those to whom it is given, what is contained in that prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Now when this comes into the sinner, it overtops, and if I may so say, it drowns all the objections of his poverty, and he is enabled to boldly obey. I say boldly, because faith is a bold grace. "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Now that is one thing in this first case. He is compelled, he sees death outside, he sees hell at the end of a wicked life. He is blessed with repentance, and so he says, "if free grace, I will venture." I will go, and he has a Guide to take him to that great house, and that great feast, thus mercifully provided for him.

And the maimed, a poor deformed creature, lacking a member of his body, not fit to appear before any respectable people in

his own judgement; he cannot move without assistance. Does this represent one who has been searched as with candles? has been put into the balance, and found wanting? has had the spirit of judgement, and the spirit of burning, so that now he is all but consumed. A maimed person, a poor creature, half a creature; oh, he says, sin has ruined me; crippled me, made me unfit for the society of any good people. Here I am, a living witness to the power, the maiming power of sin. A witness also to this; that God would be just if He had no mercy on him. And what in this case is the compelling. This goes on, I believe; what is the compelling? Just the same as the poor man needed, but in some particular perhaps, there's a little difference. As when the man says I cannot move; I am crippled; I have no crutches; I am a poor helpless creature. Well, we know what that means, some of us at least do. We know what it is to be unable to move, to have no power. A will given, but no power at the present. And what does the Holy Spirit do? Why, as it were, takes him and puts him on the wings of Divine intercession, in his heart. "The Spirit maketh intercession, with groanings which cannot be uttered." If you know this man, you know a man who creeps about the house, groans in his spirit, sends out mighty cries to God for mercy, and for assistance which alone come from Him. He is crippled by doubt; he is crippled by infidelity; he is crippled by vain and foolish thoughts; nay, by abominations not to be uttered. Ah, he is a cripple indeed! But now as I say, the kind Spirit of God comes, and takes him and puts him on wings, of an inward intercession, and a groaning that cannot be uttered; strong cries that ascend to the Most High God.

And there are arguments used as if the Lord argues. One argument is this, "Come now, and let us reason together." You have your reasons - your crippled condition, your sinful state, your condemnation, your lusts, your vanity, your pride; you have all these objections. I do not dispute them. No. Let me for a moment as it were, turn aside and say - God never disputes any conviction, any trouble for sin, about sin, that we may have. When you have painted the worst, when you have uttered the very worst word that you can utter respecting your condition, God will never contradict it, never say that you have exaggerated the case, but He has arguments which will drown all the objections that the maimed has. The gospel gives wings, limbs; the gospel makes whole. Yes dear friends, the gospel makes entire a person who was not entire, except entirely lost, and this argument is very effectual. Come let us reason together; your sins are scarlet, they are double-dyed, they are crimson! What then? Though they be so, they shall be as white as snow. Purer than the purest wool. God shall take them all away. Now this is a compelling influence, a mighty power. The gospel is more than sin, my friends, as everyone knows to whom the Holy Ghost brings it. The feast is prepared; the room is ready and God will have the maimed to be His guests. Yes, and the Holy Ghost has the best of the argument. He has. I do not mind what argument you have against yourselves. I have more than any of you really, because I have more sin, but then, God's argument will outweigh yours. Let us - O the condescension - let us - I, the Almighty Saviour, whose vicarious death made an end

of sin. I the Almighty Saviour. The just God and the Saviour. "If we confess our sins," is another argument, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What poor penitent, to whom that word was ever spoken, could resist it, reject it, cast it aside? It takes all the infidelity and all the doubt and all the fear, all the gloom and all the feeling of hell; it takes all away. Faithful! O the argument of divine faithfulness in respect of forgiveness. O the argument of justice to take away the sins of a confessing sinner. Not a condition of merit. No. A condition of merit you may have. God has not a condition of merit. O remember that, but a condition of method. It is this -
✓ I came to call sinners to repentance. If you have no repentance the call will not reach your heart, but if you have repentance, there is God's blessed method and manner of dealing with his argument - all that a sinner can say against himself. And the maimed comes.

And the halt - the poor creature who does not know which way to turn. The devil says, this is right, and reason says, that is right. Works claim also to be listened to, or looked at. So the sinner halts. What am I to do? What am I to believe? Which way am I to go? There is the way of reason and there is the way of self-righteousness; there is the way of self-goodness; the way of self-power; self-direction. O what an attractive way that is. The man is kept by the fear of God from going that way. There is the way of free grace and he says, I do not deserve that. There is the way of justification and he halts before he can take a step that way. What is the compelling power here? The blaze of the cross. The glory of Christ's death. When the sinner sees that, all his halting, all his comeliness will turn into corruption and death. Now he sees what he never saw before - free grace - and this goes on throughout the experience more or less distinctly. The poor sinner comes under the sweet influence, the powerful attraction of the cross revealed by the Holy Spirit. A man is compelled. "Compel them to come in!" It is heavenly compelling. It is not something against a man's will, though it is against his will, but it is according to his will renewed by the Holy Ghost. O he says, I am willing as far as I know myself, if I may but come, but I am afraid - he halts - until the blessed cross of Jesus is revealed, then he says,

"Lo! 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."

O you can never understand it, till you feel it. What a power there is in the cross to attract and draw a sinner to the Lord and bring him into the house.

Now there is the blind man. His eyes are open to see sin, death and hell in the light of God's justice. Ah, he sees himself, but he is very blind to that which God will open. Blind to the riches of grace; to the sovereignty of divine love; to the sweetness of the gospel; to the glory of the promises. Blind to all these things. He wants to be right but he does not know the way; he would fain go to the city but he has no eyes

to show him the way; he is a poor blind creature. How can he find his way into this house where the feast is. Ask him; he says - "I do not know - I have no eyes, how can I find my way." Well now, the Holy Spirit has to do with this man. O how good the Holy Ghost. He says to the blind - "Come forth." The blind is in prison, shut up and cannot come forth, and the Spirit says - "Come forth, show yourself," and he comes forth. Led by a hand he does not see, by a power on him which he does not feel, but he is led, and then the Spirit opens his eyes. Yes, the Spirit opens his eyes, and he sees what he never imagined. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Now the things of the Spirit are shown to these blind men. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But now they are set out before this blind man in the light of the Spirit. Light enters his heart, God the Holy Spirit shines into his heart and he sees the Saviour. What a sight! He sees the Saviour. An able Saviour. That is a great thing to us. An able Saviour. He sees the Intercessor - "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." When you got this sight O sinner, you were not blind. When you got the sight of the Son of man glorified, the God-man, the High Priest sitting on His throne, then you were not blind; you saw what wise men in this world never see, never can see. Now the effect of this on the blind man is that he runs. The way is so plain to him now, that while he reads of it, he runs all the way. His heart, his understanding, are enlightened by the light of the living, from Him it came who is the Fountain of Light. And he sees the sweetness, clearness, blessedness of salvation, all by Jesus Christ, and he runs that way. Christ is a Refuge, and the sinner runs into it. He sees Him to be a Refuge and he runs into it.

Now look at this. Here are these cases, and the Lord said, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled." The table is prepared, let us look for a few minutes at the table. The Saviour says to His guests, "Eat O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." What is the food? You know, who have had it. The Scripture tells us, Jesus tells us, "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." What a table! What a provision for poor sinners. Ah, say some here, perhaps we shall never get there. Why, what foolishness that is. How did Paul get there? Grace! Free grace took him. How did the disciples get there? Free grace took them there. Jesus took them, Jesus took them, and He said, "Take, eat; this is My Body." Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?" This cup, this bread, all God's people eat and drink. Sit at table, eat says Jesus. We can never understand fully the freeness of this - it is so free, it is beyond understanding. It is so free that it puts reason, desire to provide for yourself, out of court altogether. It is so free that there is no man, so vile, if blessed with repentance, who is not worthy to come. "Worthy?" you

say. Yes, they were in a poor condition at Laodicea when they said they were rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing. But when one says, I need all God has to give, I need a full Christ, a whole Christ, a willing Christ; I need the provision that the Eternal Father made, when He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. I need all that.

Well dear friends, this is the provision. Sometimes when you are in secret, the Lord has given you some of this provision, has He not? Sometimes it may have been here He has set the provision before you, and you have been obliged to eat. "Obliged?" you say. Yes, your reason put out, your objections answered, your weakness met, and you have been able, sweetly able, to sit down at table with your Lord, and eat celestial food. He brings His people into the Church; there is His rest; there He delights to feed; there He entertains His guests. There is a sweet familiarity that Christ holds with His people - you know what I mean - when there has been a mutual embrace; when the Lord has sustained you with His left hand and embraced you with His right hand, and when you have embraced Him in the arms of your faith. Little though that faith may have been, you have embraced Him. He has blessed you, and you have praised and blessed Him. This is the Lord's provision. Now my brethren, I know under Divine grace, you feel unworthy, and sometimes, as Hart has it, "almost as unwilling." But the servant is sent out, and he says - I wont listen to your objections, I have a commission. A minister has a commission - a commission is not to tell people how good they are, but how wicked. Not to set people down short of the table; O no! Not to go to them and say, "if you have such and such feelings you are safe." The feelings may be right, they may be wrong. The servant has not to do that kind of thing. He has to do this - my Master has provided for sinners; my Master has sent me to sinners. I cannot preach to good people, the servant says, because I'm not sent to good people, I'm sent to poor people who have not a penny to pay the immense debt, - no. They owe God perfect obedience; they owe Him perfection in their nature, as well as in their conduct, and they have not anything to meet that liability with. Now, says the servant, He wont have your penny, He wont listen to anything you say about your possessions. What He will have you do, is this - and He will give you grace to do it. To leave all, and take up your cross, and follow Him. The blessed Saviour says, "O friend, come and eat the provision made for you, without money and without price." What, says a proud heart, am I to be in debt always? Yes, faith says, and the longer I live, the deeper I shall be plunged into debt, and the more glad I shall be to be so. "Yet would I glory in the thought, that I shall owe Him most."

"That My house may be filled." O, the devil would not have it filled if he could avoid it. Men would not go in of themselves if they could keep away. But God says, "I will have this people." He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. I have lived long enough to know something of pride. My pride would make God a debtor, but God says, No!

You must come into the dust, - He has put me there many and many a time. O, but that is the way to the great house, my friends. I have no wisdom; God is Wisdom. I have no strength; the Strength of Israel is quite enough, but I shall be always in the dust. Not always! When you get into this great house, you wont be in the dust. You will never think better of yourself when you are there. You will say, "O why did the Lord do this for me? How could He be so gracious to me?" You can understand, in a way, how He could bless others, but "how could He bless me?" He will do it because He will.

What is the fulness of this house? The fulness of Christ! The Church is the fulness of Christ. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." My friends, that is the fulness of the house! The Church of God which is "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." A wonderful thing that the Church should be the fulness of Christ. ("Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." That is the fulness - that all the Father gave Christ, shall come to Him, and be His people, and fill the house. He will fill the house with His Glory. Yes, He will fill the house with His Glory. That is to say, every vessel of mercy shall be full. No vessel shall be empty. "O," you say, "but I am empty!" Yes, and you will always be getting empty. One who professes Godliness, and is not emptied from vessel to vessel, is not in this house. But when there is an emptying from vessel to vessel, an increase of poverty, a growth of weakness, a growth of ignorance of your sense of things, then the house - the door - is open. Open night and day, and there's no night there, and thus the freeness of grace is made known.

The freeness of grace is revealed in two places. Listen! First, in this Book. O what words God has used to express grace. The seed of the woman; the child born; the Son given; the Father not sparing His Son; filling His Son Incarnate with the Spirit without measure; Christ dying; being commanded by His Father to die; rising again by the power of God; ascending into heaven; interceding there for dumb people. O, the Scriptures abound, in describing the freeness of grace. When you read the Scriptures prayerfully and carefully, and the Holy Spirit is with you, you will sometimes see a Sun. O, the Sun, the Sun of Righteousness! What is the other place? The heart of a sinner; the understanding of a sinner; the mind of a sinner; the will of a sinner. Now, free grace comes, free grace abounds; free grace overtops all reasonings; all goodness; all tempers; sweet frames, and comes to the lost. I have liked that word, "the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." Free grace is the compelling power. The sweet irresistible, invincible influence that carries along with it, as it moves Godward, these poor people. Now, may the Lord open this to us. I shall never be able to preach as I want to do, free, Sovereign, grace, but O if the Lord would commend free grace to you by what little I have said (this evening,) the praise shall be His. Amen.