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THE FATHER WHO IS IN THE HEAVENS

Matthew 5: 44-48; Hebrews 12

S.D.P. The thought in Matthew's gospel was that we might get an impression of how the Father, who is in the heavens, is in a sense beyond all; not affected by evil. I think it is something wonderful.

The Lord says, "Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect". It is an idea of likeness to the Father, "that ye may be the sons of your Father", and it is the character of the present dispensation. But in Hebrews it is wonderful to me the kind of persons who have part in the divine system, which is established now in Christ but will be displayed at the Lord's coming. The persons are formed in the present time and they are this family, "the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven". It is something we all have part in. It belongs to the privilege of a family. As we know, Hebrews takes up Christian privilege and this is one of them. I was impressed too with Christ as High Priest. There are two qualities we find fully in Him. The first is that He is faithful and the other is that He is merciful. These are two wonderful qualities you find in Christ and we need them; so we are exhorted to be "looking stedfastly on Jesus", to be attracted to the Lord Jesus. Perhaps we might get a touch about the "joy lying before him" and how it is connected with the thought of despising the shame; and then perhaps to have a short touch about what is involved in the thought of "partaking of his holiness"; then the impression of the order of things, the divine system of things, we have come to. It says, "ye have come to" them. We have not only a mount, the mount Zion, but we have a city. It is all an order of things which is established in Christ. As we know, there is no divine speaking after the Son because it will be display, and you have an impression that you have come to that. I would suggest that the persons who have come to that – it is something you reach in your souls – are those who have gone into the holiest. It is not at the same level as Ephesians because you are in the wilderness, but it is the outlook you have, and we need to have a right outlook; first Jesus, and then you see

that you have come to an order of things, the divine system, which is in contrast with the present order of things. In Ephesians 3 everything is in you and you are in the land, and it is in you.

Somebody said Ephesians 3 is like the basket, and the fulness is in the basket – “filled even to all the fulness of God” (v.19). Here you do not go so far but still you have come to that. You can identify things and first of all you come to mount Zion and, as we know, mount Zion links with Psalm 87 where we have forfeited everything – I know for myself – and you come on the ground of divine mercy.

God brings in His own thoughts and the world to come will be the display of His mercy.

P.L.J. Mount Zion is in contrast to mount Sinai.

S.D.P. Yes, you explain that to us.

P.L.J. I think what you are saying is good. I just wanted to contrast those two. As you were speaking of mount Zion, it is the contrast with mount Sinai.

S.D.P. Mount Sinai would be something God would still use to speak to man in the flesh, in the sense that Christ is the Head of every man. All will have to answer to Him.

P.L.J. It brings out what man in the flesh is.

S.D.P. And Mount Sinai was made to appeal to man in the flesh, but God got no answer from man in the flesh so He had to revert to His own purpose and He comes to mount Zion, which involves the resurrection of Christ. You reach what is permanent in the resurrection of Christ and it is a selective resurrection. It is affecting how God is moving. He is unaffected by what man is doing. He is beyond everything. It is amazing that man in his wickedness does not alter God's attitude. It has come to me lately that God has His own thoughts. Whatever man may be doing, God is going on with His own thoughts but then if we are in relationship with Himself, He has to do with us and we have to do with Him. It is because you are sons and it belongs to privilege. For me it is a privilege which is as great as going into the holiest to be subject to the discipline of the Father of spirits. What do you think?

P.L.J. What do you think is involved in that expression that you read in Matthew, “be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”?

S.D.P. What have you in mind?

P.L.J. I was thinking the word ‘perfect’ may be interpreted in different ways, but it does not just say, “Be ye therefore perfect”, but “as your heavenly Father is perfect”. That is the standard. It is even as He is.

S.D.P. Do you not think that shows that it does not belong to us naturally, but that it means that any act towards you does not alter or change whatever the condition of man and we all know how quickly we are affected by and how we react to the way things come within our reach. I understand that to be “perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” means that you are unaffected in this sense.

P.L.J. So the Father is who He is and what He is regardless of what happens and we are to be the same.

S.D.P. Exactly.

P.L.J. That is what I feel.

K.M.P. In character, would you say? In verse 45 it says, “that ye may be the sons of your Father who is in the heavens”. Is that what you have in mind, the character of the Father? You mentioned that what is characteristic is derived from the Father.

S.D.P. Yes, no doubt it would involve being begotten of Him. We are of His family. Is that what you mean? There is no doubt about it because it does not belong to us naturally, however nice we may be.

D.M.W. Is that why it says that God accepts no man’s person. He does not accept us on the basis of personality but takes us up for His own will. I think the Father of spirits and the heavenly Father seem to go together. It is not the spirit known here of what we are naturally as persons who are not affected by whatever we say or think, unaffected by the evil, in that sense, except to have the Father’s view of it. It says, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy”. That is what this scripture begins with: “it has been said ... But / say unto you, Love your enemies”. I do not see how we

could do that unless we were perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. He is not affected by the evil.

S.D.P. No, He is not, so it is in this way that there is an expression of the characteristics of the Father who is in the heavens. The law was all-constructive and, how you behave regarding God's requirements. The Lord says, No, the way you get things now is from God's point of view, and He just takes up something very simple about the sun and the rain to explain what He has in mind. He uses creation to explain something to the disciples, to us.

S.S. Would you say though that there is a difference between what the Lord Jesus brought out when He commanded us to love one another? That was a command for love amongst each other as brethren, but this is different when it says, "Love your enemies". He is giving us instruction as to how to proceed in the world so that the features of the Father are seen in us.

S.D.P. Yes, and no doubt to love your brother would be the evidence of the divine nature (see 1 John 3).

K.M.P. It may be easier to love your brother than it is to love your enemy.

S.D.P. It might be, but I suppose here it does not necessarily mean that there is something lovable. To have love among ourselves, in John's epistle, would be that there is something lovable in the person. The simple fact is that he belongs to the same family; whether he is a father or a young man or a little child, he is one of the family. The very fact that he belongs to the family means he is loved but here it is that I do not react or I am not moved according to what is done to me. I know it is very difficult even among the saints, but I was impressed and wanted to share that it is what the Lord has in mind, as you said before, not only that we should be perfect but "as your heavenly Father is perfect". Mr Darby said you cannot be perfect as the heavenly Father if you are not perfect with Him. It is what God said to Abraham, "walk before my face, and be perfect", Gen 17: 1.

D.M.W. Is this part of the whole matter in Hebrews 12?

P.L.J. You mean being perfect as your heavenly Father?

D.M.W. And the chastening is necessary to bring us through to something far outside our natural thinking and feelings. The Father's heart is in love towards us to bring us to His likeness. We sometimes say we are being conformed to the likeness of Christ, which is also true, but maybe we need this more. We would be towards others as the Father would be towards them and therefore He chastens us that this might be the outcome.

S.D.P. Yes, in view that we might be partakers of His holiness. I think it is most wonderful to see what is in view, but you see the pathway in which we are and in which the family, the assembly, the personnel of the assembly, is between the two comings of Christ. In the first verses you have the first coming of Christ and I thought perhaps that there is a link between "Jesus the leader and completer of faith", and the beginning of the creation of God, even if it came out in His pathway. All God's thoughts for us in the present dispensation have been set out in Christ; He is the pattern and you see the finality in Him. It is very important to have a right beginning and a right view of what is final and it is all in Christ.

D.M.W. Do you think if He Himself is "the beginning of the creation of God", He is the one faithful Witness to the creation of God? You get that title in Revelation 3: "the faithful and true witness, the beginning of creation of God" (Rev 3: 14), so what was set on in the beginning of the creation, we have one true Witness. We can see the beginning of it and we can see all the way, through but we cannot see the end of it, and know that it is all filled out in Him. The divine intent therefore is, through chastening, that we be in the creation of God by Him. It is not theoretical.

S.D.P. In a sense Hebrews 12 would link with Philippians 3, and Hebrews 10, the access to the holiest, would link with Ephesians 2, not at the same level, but still the very same idea. One proof that you are running the race, I have felt, is that what is unseen is what is real because it is established in Christ and we see that what is

unseen becomes more real than what is seen and it is the proof that we are going on in the race, do you think?

P.L.J. Yes, I think that is the focus. It is remarkable how Christ is prominent in this portion you read in Hebrews – “the leader and completer” and “consider well him who endured so great contradiction”. It seems that the writer would desire to have their minds and sights set on Christ and not occupied with circumstances.

S.D.P. I do not know what your understanding is about this thought of “the joy lying before him”. What is your thought about that?

P.L.J. To my mind it all connects with what I feel is really the primary object, that their eyes should not be on present circumstances and trials and difficulties which may be there, but on Christ and the joy lying before. All that is the positive side. It seems to me that there is a tendency to get on the negative side rather than the positive of what we have and what we are and what is ours. I think that is what really edifies, do you not?

S.S. Would you say, to use a modern term, that this first part of Hebrews 12 really keeps you in focus?

P.L.J. That is right: that is the focus.

D.M.W. Do you think that “the joy lying before him” has anything to do with the thought of the creation of God?

S.D.P. Yes, I wondered if it involves the platform of resurrection. I wondered if there was a link with John 14, “if ye loved me ye would rejoice that I go to the Father” (v 28). I was linking that with Psalms 16 and 17. In Psalm 16 it says, “thy countenance is fulness of joy” (v 11). It is the language of Christ. In a sense you see when the Lord speaks about “your Father who is in the heavens” (I am sorry that I have difficulty in conveying the impression but if we can get it, I think it would be good), the Father is beyond; He is unaffected by things; and what the Lord had before Himself was an order of things where everything is of God. Down here, even in the assembly, we suffer from all that is of man, the flesh and whatever form of the flesh, but still God is using that because we need the discipline ourselves in

view of being partakers of His holiness, in view of having the same language and entering into the same joy which was before Himself.

In Psalm 16 it says, “thy countenance is fulness of joy” and when the Lord spoke to the disciples in John 14 it was what He had on His heart for the disciples, “If ye loved me ye would rejoice that I go to the Father”. What it meant for the Lord to go the Father, to be raised and to ascend! What it meant for Him, and not alone because in Psalm 17 it says, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, *with thy likeness*” (v 15). Beloved brethren, it is what we aspire to, this final condition where everything is filled to the glory of God and with Christ. But there is all this process. The Father is taking care of forming the greatest family, all this divine system. Think about the greatness of this divine system!

We are not just in the wilderness. We have come to the divine system which is existing today.

K.M.P. Could you link it too with the apostle’s sentiments in Philippians 3 where he says, “stretching out to the things before, I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. As many therefore as are perfect, let us be thus minded” (vv 14,15). The thought of the goal here and the prize is not personal, not in any way, but the word you used, the wonderful aspect of this divine system, all being what he could enter into now but would culminate in that day. Would that link?

S.D.P. In Philippians Paul was sharing what was on his heart with them and he wanted them to go into what is excellent, refined. I think it is part of the formation of the assembly in the last days that any resistance, if I can say this, to the attacks of the devil, is involved in the thought of standing, defending the position. It means that the way you act is because you know something of the purity, the beauty, the glory of the presence of God, and you aspire that everything will be permeated by Him. And it will be so soon: we have *come* to mount Zion and not only do we have a mount but we have the city of the living God.

K.M.P. Would you say, though, that the end that God has in view when He deals with us as sons is “in order to the partaking of his

holiness” (v.10). Then it goes on from verse 12, the responsible side and verse 14 says, “Pursue peace with all, and holiness” so that brings in our side. God has holiness in view. The characteristic of holiness itself, I take it, is what verse 10 is, but in verse 14 it is the action that leads to it.

S.D.P. Yes, I think what you say is very important because it is a matter of subjection to the Father of spirits. It would not be possible to follow up what is in verse 12 and so on if we were not in subjection to the Father of spirits and if we are not exercised by it, by the chastening, but you trace things to the Father so you do not feel that the Father is against you. He wants us to be on His side. Do you think so?

K.M.P. Well, the Father has an object in view in taking you up and it is for “the partaking of this holiness” and also “the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised by it” which lays the responsibility on us, do you not think? That there has to be exercise on our part to be subject to God’s dealings with us, whether that be how He deals with us personally or assembly-wise. In a reading meeting such as this there may be a word that comes forward which could be chastening of the Lord, do you think?

S.D.P. Yes, it might be. Here it is the chastening of the Father. I suppose it would link very much with John 15, where the Lord says, “my Father is the husbandman” (v.1)?

P.L.J. As to the branches and so forth?

S.D.P. Exactly.

D.M.W. So the titles in verses 5 and 6 really belong to the Father. It is not the Lord Jesus; it is the Father.

S.D.P. Yes, it is the Father, but the Lord of the heaven and the earth.

D.M.W. Just so, the way the Lord Jesus addresses the Father.

S.D.P. Exactly.

P.L.J. Sovereignty, you mean?

D.M.W. He is supreme as to this matter of chastening.

P.L.J. Yes, that is the thought of the Lord of the heaven and the earth.

D.M.W. It is not the Lord Jesus, but the Father who is supreme in the economy.

K.M.P. "For also our God is a consuming fire". You would be impressed with His holiness.

S.D.P. He will never allow anything which is not according to Himself.

K.M.P. Does that link back to your initial introductory comments as to the Father in the heavens? He is there unaffected in one way and yet He would not in any way lower the heavenly standard. I am not trying to confuse the thought of God here and Father, that the Father is first a term of relationship, endearment, and we would be sons in that relationship, but we have one God the Father; which would link the two in that way. What do you think about that?

S.D.P. That is true, but it says too that the Father judges no one. Then you come to what cannot be shaken: "receiving a kingdom not to be shaken, have grace". It is a divine system of grace. You see it in the Person of the Lord Himself. Grace makes nothing of man. Mr Darby says that quite often. When you preach pure grace, man rejects it because it makes nothing of man. Law makes something of man. It means that you are able to do something, but grace makes nothing of man, so as to all this divine system we have come to, we have done nothing, but it is wonderful to see how the Father of spirits has to do mainly with our spirits. He forms the family which belongs to "the firstborn who are registered in heaven", who have such a place of distinction in this divine system in the world to come. It is not an eternal setting, as we know, the world to come, but it is wonderful and there is divine speaking. I thought lately you cannot have divine speaking in a human order of things. Divine speaking is always connected with the divine system and this is very clear in Hebrews. Do you think so?

D.M.W. You mentioned holiness. It is what is in view in chastening, “partaking of his holiness”. It seems to come by God’s righteousness, not man’s righteousness. Can you help us a little more on that?

S.D.P. On the thought of righteousness? Well, you know better than I.

D.M.W. I was wondering if it gives permanence to the divine system. God’s righteousness has been established; it has been declared. I think it embraces the way in which God moves to carry it out.

S.D.P. Yes, it would link with what was said before in Philippians 3. Paul was so absorbed with God’s righteousness. He said whatever I have done, it would be my righteousness. It might be a Pharisee of Pharisees, but it would still be man’s righteousness; it would not be God’s. Only God can provide righteousness, His own righteousness.

D.M.W. Is it something we look for? It has been established and declared as something we look for as we undergo this chastening so that there can be the peaceful fruit of it and we can be partakers of His holiness. It has, I suppose, in our minds, evil in view but yet good, abhorring evil and delighting in good, but maybe holiness goes further than that because it is certainly not arrived at by faith. I think it is arrived at through what we have here in Hebrews 12.

S.D.P. Yes, “partaking of his holiness”. Do you mean it is more than being set apart? It involves formation in the divine nature. By calling we are set apart. I find it interesting because this epistle makes a lot of priesthood and, as we know, only Christ has been called priest and He is the Son and the sonship of Christ too is quite stressed in this epistle and we are priests because we are related to Him, not because we are called to be priests but because we are kindred to Him, and it involves a moral process. It is not only a matter of purpose, even if it is based on it as those who are sanctified.

P.L.J. What are you referring to by moral process?

S.D.P. In chapter 5, before the writer unfolded the greatness of the priest according to the order of Melchisedec, he first of all stressed

obedience which would be a moral feature. Then in chapter 6 there is the thought of being “imitators of those who through faith and patience have been inheritors of the promises” (v 12). “Through faith and patience”: do you think they would be moral characteristics of priests, obedience, faith and patience? In chapters 5 and 6 the writer reverts to their state. It shows the writer was very careful. He cannot bring in the truth without taking into account the state of the people to whom he was speaking that they might fully understand; so he is free in chapter 7 to say “such a high priest became us” (v. 26), evidently it is not the ground of God’s purpose but still there is something which has been worked out in persons.

K.M.P. Would you say that in 1 Peter it is very clear that we are all priests, “a holy priesthood” (chap 2: 5) and yet what you are bringing out as to the activity to carry it out rightly is a moral process?

S.D.P. Yes, I came lately upon a remark of Mr. Raven’s where he said, I do not care too much for evangelical movements making much of saying that all believers are priests, even if it belongs as a privilege for each.

K.M.P. you would not take being a priest lightly, would you?

S.D.P. Exactly. It involves that you learn to be on God’s side, but in favour of man because the priests has been taken from among men that he might be able. Christ had to go through a certain pathway in view of demonstrating His qualifications, if we can say, to be priest.

K.M.P. Would you say though in Hebrews it says of the Lord Jesus as priest, “For such a high priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens” (chap 7: 26)? Are we to be exercise to take on His features? We are to take character after Him.

P.L.J. You think it might be features of the priesthood of believers?

K.M.P. Christ is unique in His priesthood in one sense because it is “according to power of indissoluble life” (Heb 7: 16), so He is unique in that sense, but we are to take character after Christ.

P.L.J. He is the High Priest and we are a priestly family. Is that what you mean?

S.D.P. Yes, and He is High Priest as being raised from among the dead. The only reference to His priesthood before death is in chapter 2.

P.L.J. He was not that when He was here on earth.

D.M.W. I think what you are saying is that His moral qualifications came out here for Him to be High Priest on the other side of death as we see in chapter 7, verse 26 as quoted. This is your exercise that He “learned obedience from the things which he suffered” (Heb 5: 8), and He is “the leader and completer of faith”. “The patience of the Christ “ (2 Thess 3: 5) is spoken of, in a different context, of course, but these three moral elements of obedience, patience and would seem to be worked out in our experience which oft times requires chastening.

S.D.P. Yes, the Lord did not need that, but we need it, and it is wonderful if we can look at chastening in this way because it is not against us; it is for us. It is in view that we might be nearer to God.

D.M.W. Is love behind that? So, as has been said, even if it is severe, His love is behind that. It is not cutting off our heads but it has an end in view.

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Key to Initials:

P.L. Johnson; K.M. Pearson; S. Selman; D.M. Welch, Denton;
S.D. Perret, Vevey

(I am sorry if there is inaccuracy in the attribution to remarks. Ed.)

“DRIVEN OUT, COMPELLED TO COME IN”

David Robertson

Genesis 3: 20-24; Luke 14: 15-24

The first scripture read speaks about God driving man out and the second speaks about the bondman compelling men to come in – a very great contrast! One would remind us that God had to take this action in Genesis chapter 3 because man, His creature, had come under the power of sin. God, being God, was “of purer eyes than to behold evil”, Hab 1: 13. So He had to take issue with His creature.

It was not an unfeeling matter with God. He felt for man and He felt too the loss of man because sin had robbed Him of His creature.

God felt that keenly. I want to use these scriptures in as simple a way as I can, and if there should be one here still in their sins, God feels keenly for you. I believe that none of us can fully understand how much God feels as to man away from Himself in sin.

And so God takes account of this terrible happening that sin entered in through man’s disobedience, because He had placed man in a place of great favour, of great blessing. He had provided for Him in the way that only God could. Yet in spite of all that, man disobeyed God and became a sinner. It was caused through disobedience. The root principle of sin is disobedience. We will see later on, I trust, that the root principle of blessing is that we begin to obey the glad tidings. That is what God is looking for as He announces the glad tidings, that we might be persons who in the obedience of faith accept the glad tidings and come into wonderful blessing! Nevertheless, what this scripture teaches us is that God could not tolerate sin in His presence and He drove man out, a very strong matter, a judicial action by God, and yet, as we know, those who have some understanding of the teaching of scripture, there was mercy involved in it. He says, “lest he stretch out his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever ...!” It was as if God was considering this matter. The tree of life was there to sustain man in life that would go through eternally without death, and God was considering the situation as only God could consider it

because God was the One who was offended by the coming in of sin. He felt it and, as I have said, He felt it keenly. He is taking account, we may say, of the reality of man, eating of the tree of life and going on eternally as a sinner. What a thought, man going on uninterruptedly going on in sin, and God interrupted that. While God acted in judgment, it was an act of mercy that God interrupted the awfulness of man living forever in sins. What a terrible thought!

And so He protects the way to the tree of life. It says, “And he drove out man; and he set the Cherubim, and the flame of the flashing sword, toward the east of the garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life”. He did not remove the tree of life. It was still there, but it was guarded. The way to the tree of life was guarded and man, as man in his sin, never regained that. There had to be a change and only God Himself could effect that change. Only God Himself could establish a condition of things where man once again, apart from sin, would have access to the tree of life. That is what we have in Luke 14, and I will come to that. That is what I want to speak about, but I just want to get home to you the sobriety of this thought that sin was such in God’s sight that He could not countenance man living for ever in sin and He drove out man from His presence, and He put the Cherubim – it speaks of God’s righteousness – “and the flame of the flashing sword, toward the east of the garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life”. How solemn that is! What an action on God’s part! I trust, dear friend, that you have some sense that you have to do with such a God. It is imperative. He is a righteous God. Have you ever faced up to that? Have you ever faced up to the solemn reality that you have to do with a righteous God who knows not only your actions but who knows every inward motive of your heart? “All things are naked and laid bare to his eyes, with whom we have to do”, Heb 4: 13. He is a holy and He is a righteous God. Men live as if there was no God. What a reality when you are brought face to face with the sure understanding in your heart that you must have to do with God.

It is in view of blessing. God is not driving man out now. He has secured a means whereby He can compel men to come in.

What a change was needed if man had to be brought into blessing and compelled to come into blessing – for make no mistake, that is God's attitude today. He is *compelling* men to come into blessing and unless God compels you, you will never come into blessing. As you will see in Luke 14, none of the invited came. And if you were left to your own devices and I was left to my own devices, we would never come, but the truth is that in the glad tidings, God is *compelling* men to come in. It is a wonderful compulsion: it is the compulsion of divine grace. It is the complete opposite, we may say, of this action that God had necessarily to take because of His righteousness and because He must guard the way to the tree of life and prevent man from living for ever in his sin. God has found a means and He has found it through His beloved Son and the work that the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished on the cross of Calvary. God has found a means whereby He can righteously bless man on the principle of His grace. What a blessed God He is!

I want to speak a little about Luke 14. I have said enough about Genesis 3, I trust, to sober us that we have to do with a righteous God about our *sins*. There is no way out of it. If you are to come into blessing, you have to do with God about your sins and the first step to blessing is that you accept that you are a sinner in the sight of a righteous, holy God. It is not a question of trying to do better or trying to improve. You never will. It is a question of coming to the simple acknowledgment that you and I are sinners in the sight of a holy and righteous God, then to come to the realisation that God has prepared a condition of things through the redemptive work of Christ where men can be brought in to the richest possible blessing.

What this section in Luke 14 sets out is that God is inviting you to join Him in *His* feast. It is not a question of what the sinner finds in Christ exactly in this section; it is a question of what God has found in Christ. And God would invite you to share in the infinite delight and satisfaction that *He* finds in the work of Christ accomplished in righteousness through redemption. That is the substantial truth of the glad tidings. Of course, the sinner is blessed through it, but you could never be blessed unless first of all God

Himself had been satisfied with Christ and with Christ's work, and the glorious truth is, dear friend, that the Lord Jesus Christ has come here as man, He has gone through a life of perfection, doing the will of God and delighting to do it, but *laying down His life* at the end of that life, that God might be glorified, satisfied with the work that has judicially terminated the great question of sin. One's heart is full with that, that God is totally satisfied with what the Lord Jesus Christ has done in meeting the requirements of divine righteousness. The work is complete: sin has been dealt with, has been taken account of by God and *judged unsparingly* in the Person of His Son. You think of that cry we often refer to on the cross when the Lord Jesus said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt 27: 46. Have you ever contemplated that? Have you ever thought about it? Has it ever entered into your soul, the tremendous awfulness, the horror of that moment? No wonder one could say:

O day of greatest sorrow,
Day of unfathomed grief!
When Thou did'st taste the horror
Of wrath without relief.

Has it ever come into your soul, dear friend, that Christ endured the wrath of God on your account? If you are to be brought into blessing, it necessitated that the Lord Jesus had to meet sin as it was in God's sight, not as it was in your sight or as it was in man's sight, but as it was in God's sight. There was a transaction to take place between God and Christ. Think of a holy God and a holy Man! Beloved Mr. Darby said there was nothing unholy in that scene except your sins and mine. A holy God and a holy Man, and yet what was being judged was the terrible unholiness of sin! You might say, what a God! What a Saviour! Friend, what does it mean to you, that the Lord Jesus should go that way that you might be saved, that I might be saved, that we might be brought into blessing, that God might be satisfied with the meeting in righteousness of the whole question of sin. God dealt with it there unmitigatingly. He did not spare Christ. Christ bore in judgment, the weight of the judgment of God against sin.

Now this chapter is recorded on the assumption that the work is completed and God is satisfied with it and the great question is that He makes “a great supper”. It is not just an ordinary supper; it is “a great supper”. Scripture speaks about a “great salvation” (Heb 2: 3) and surely we can speak about a “great salvation”. We certainly can speak about a great God and a great Saviour and a great gospel. It is a great feast, not only great in the eyes of men like ourselves who have come into blessing but great in the eyes of God because God is *celebrating*. He is celebrating the glory and the satisfaction He has in the completed work of Christ on the cross of Calvary. What a work it is! It satisfies God and, not only that, He is justified with the perfection of the One who has accomplished it.

And so the invitation goes out. It is a “great supper” and I trust it would become great in your heart that God has provided such a supper and would invite you to it to share with Himself in His delight in His Son. There were persons neglecting it. The scripture says, “how shall we escape if we have been negligent of so great salvation”, Heb 2: 3. You can be sure of this if you are amongst those who are neglecting it; eventually it might mean that you find that you have rejected it. I trust there are here no rejectors of Christ, of God’s appointed Saviour. It grieves the heart even to contemplate it, that there could be one soul in this room who is neglecting the great salvation and who may be rejecting it. Oh do not be like that! It is too solemn and too serious a matter. It involves issues that belong to eternity. Your eternal salvation depends on it. As the little poem says:

Eternity where? Eternity where?
In the glory with Jesus or lost in despair.

There is no middle road when you come to what I am preaching about. There is no neutral ground. You are either saved or you are unsaved. You are either an acceptor of Christ or a rejector of Christ. You are either one who is compelled to come in and enjoy with God His complete satisfaction in Christ and Christ’s work or you are left to utter darkness and eternal loss. Let me appeal to you, think soberly about this tonight! Be arrested in your way! Do not go on heedless

and careless! If you have gone that way, cease at once and take due consideration of where you are and how you stand before a righteous and holy God. He has made provision for you through the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ and through His precious work.

Think of Him suffering on your behalf! Think of Him laying down His life in death under the judgment of God! Think of Him shedding His precious blood, the only blood that can atone for sins. It says, "it is blood that maketh atonement for the soul", Lev 17: 11. The Lord Jesus Christ has shed that blood, the only blood that could atone for your soul. What precious blood it is!

Not only that, He has gone into the grave. He has borne the judgment of death and overthrown its power and He has come out of that, come out of the grave, risen, victorious Man and not only risen but now exalted to the right hand of God and God is saying on the ground of that glorious work, "come, for already all things are ready". Oh, that you might hear God saying that word to you. Do not stay away! Do not miss the blessing! I remember many years ago listening to the gospel and hearing an old brother speaking – no doubt he was quoting someone else – but he said that procrastination is the thief of time. Put it off and you have lost a little more time; put it off and you have lost some more; put it off and finally there is no more time left and your opportunity has gone!

Friend, it is too serious to let it go! You *must* have the blessing. The blessing that God has in mind is the greatest possible blessing and it is to understand and share with God Himself in the blessed joy that He has in His Son. That is the feast. It is a great feast, "a great supper". God is celebrating it. I may say, to speak reverently of God, His heart is fully happy and satisfied with what He has found in Christ's work and He is saying come and share it with me. What a blessed God He is! Are you going to turn your back on it? May it not be! May it be that you fall in with this compulsion of divine grace!

Well, there were those who were invited and none of them come and then it goes on, and the lame and the poor and the blind and the crippled are brought in. "And the bondman said, Sir, it is done as thou has commanded, and there is still room". That is the

position now. Thank God for it that there is still room! The day of grace is still going on. There is *still* room. But what about tomorrow? It may be gone and the opportunity might be lost. Friend, do not trifle with it!

There is a final word here. “And the lord said to the bondman”. In Matthew’s gospel it is “bondmen” (chap 22), but in this gospel it is a bondman. I think it is typical of the Holy Spirit’s service. There is a power at work in the preaching of the glad tidings, it is the power of the Holy Spirit and it is a compelling power, something that is greater than your natural revulsion keeping you away or your pride that would keep you from the blessing. There is an operation going on here, a power to be known, and it is in reality the power of the Holy Spirit that would compel you to come in. You may say it is in spite of yourself, because left to your own devices you would never come in. I know only my own heart, the choice would never have been made naturally, but through the compulsion of divine grace, you are brought in. The blessed Holy Spirit is at work, in order that you might be *compelled* to come in. What a blessed word it is: “Go out into the ways and fences and compel to come in” and there is a reason for it, “that my house may be filled”. That is what God wants for you, that you might have a place in the filling of His house. Not only would God then be satisfied with Christ – and He *is* satisfied with Christ and He will be *eternally* satisfied with Christ – but His thought is that He might be satisfied with *you*. He longs for your company. He lost man’s company through sin, but through these wonderful glad tidings of grace, God not only brings men into blessing but He secures their company for eternity. Think of God desiring *your* company for eternity! I read an interesting touch in the ministry of Mr Stoney. He said that the gospel is preached to fill a vacancy in the heart of Christ. Did you ever think about that – that Christ is up there, that glorious Saviour, the Man who has accomplished God’s will, the Man who has accomplished redemption, the Man who has met the whole question of sin in the sight of God, the blessed Man who has shattered the power of death, and who has risen and gone up – think of Him there, as you

might say, in the highest pinnacle of glory; and yet there is a vacancy in His heart and only you can fill it. Are you going to fill it tonight?

There is a vacancy in the house of God too as presented here. He says, “compel them to come in that my house may be filled”. What a heart God has! What a *house* God has! How extremely thankful I am to be able to tell you that there is still room for you tonight! Is it too simple for you? Men stumble over it. I have known such. What about you? You have had your opportunity. Oh let the appeal in, the appeal from God: “compel to come in”! You need salvation and the Saviour has accomplished the work which provides the ground of salvation. Why should you not come in? Could you give me one valid reason why you should not come in today? Well, you say, there are all these reasons here. There are none of them valid. It is a solemn thing that it goes on to say, “for I say to you, that not one of those men who were invited shall taste of my supper”. You know why they never came? Because it was left to their own choice; and if it was left to your own choice, you would never come, but God is working in the power of the Holy Spirit and He would compel you to come in. That is the kind of God we are preaching. The same God who drove man out because of His righteousness and because of the fact that He could not in any way behold iniquity in His creature, that same God has provided for men and provided for Himself, I should say, first of all, in the sufferings and death and bloodshedding of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has secured righteously the ground where He can compel men to come in in the wondrous grace of His heart to share in the greatest things with Himself and to have in yourself a person, and in all of us, with whom He can share His joys eternally. Think of being with God eternally, not only enjoying with God His satisfaction in Christ but also providing in the wonderful throng of the redeemed for the satisfaction of God’s heart eternally!

There can be no greater blessing for man than that. The greatest blessing of the creature is really to serve God in holy worship and to praise Him from satisfied heart. May it be that you will be added to that number and may there not be one in this room who is left outside of it! I say, friend, and I say with feeling, there is still room; room for you and, thank God, room for every sinner for it says that

God “desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”, 1 Tim. 2:4. Friend, there is room and there is room for you. May you not miss it, for His Name’s sake!

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