

Parables of Jesus of Nazareth

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Chapter 1 Praying Is Not To Effect Any Change In Us

Does it seem strange to hear that the Gospel does not aim at correcting nor improving human nature?

No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved (Matthew 9:16-17; Mark 2:21-22; Luke 5:36-37).

When Jesus of Nazareth was here, He was asked a question about the conduct of His disciples, implying that He should correct them, that He should do something to straighten out the way in which they were acting inasmuch as they did not seem to be disciplining themselves to do better. This was His answer: "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment." The truth that He wanted to impart in His answer was illustrated in this and another, two common practices, which His listeners would immediately understand. Because we live in a different culture, we need to study a little what He said. For instance the damaged old garment, the Lord Jesus pointed out, is not repaired. It is replaced. The damaged, old garment, the coat that was torn is not repaired by putting a piece of new cloth in there. It is replaced. You get a whole new coat.

In that day and time, cloth, was not preshrunk. We are so used to it now we do not think of it but some will remember when clothing would shrink. When I was a boy anybody that was buying a suit of clothes always had to count on the fact they had better buy it too big because by the time they were out in a rain or two it would be smaller. Nowadays, most of our clothing is preshrunk so that when you get it, it is guaranteed not to shrink. In those days, that was not the case. Woolen cloth, when it gets wet, does shrink, and so what the Lord is saying here is that if you had a piece of woolen cloth and there was a hole in it and you wanted to mend that hole; if you put a piece of new cloth in that hole in the old garment, that new patch would shrink and the old garment would have no stretch to it. It had been shrunk before and the patch in shrinking would tear a bigger hole than there was before. What the Lord is saying is, that so far as helping His people was concerned; the help that He gave was not to patch up the old, but it was to give them something new. A woolen coat when patched by a piece of new cloth and exposed to rain would only be worse off afterwards than it was before. By this He is teaching that God does not attempt to repair a part of the human being. He will replace the whole human nature. He will replace the torn garment with a whole new one.

The other illustration that was used had to do with wine. Here again we will have to study it and

as it were teach ourselves about it, because when it speaks about the wine being stored in bottles, those bottles were not made of glass. Actually, a better translation would be to say that the wine was kept in wineskins. These bottles were made of leather. They were made of skins and this brings to our mind something that happens with wine. If you have not had experience with this, you may not know about it right away, but I am sure you will recognize it when I tell you that when the new wine would be put in the bottle, in this case, in the wineskin, it passes a stage of fermentation with gas forming from that wine. Gas has more volume than it has when it is a liquid and with the more volume of gas, the new bag of green hide would stretch to accommodate that. But if you put the new wine into old wineskins that had already been stretched and you filled them with new wine, the wine would ferment and when the gas would appear, there would not be any stretch in the leather, the old skins would have no stretch to them with the result that they would burst and be ruined. This is to say that God would not put the eternal life of God into our human personalities as such, into our human nature as such. He will replace the old personality, the old person with new, with a new nature. This could be illustrated among us if we were to think about how, I am sure some of you have had this happen, you perhaps have had machinery that needed to be repaired. There is some machinery that is of such a nature that no attempt is made to repair it. It is well known that oftentimes when you are repairing machinery, that the new part you put in does not fit the older parts around it, the worn parts that are around it, and so actually it is not well done. Oftentimes the only adequate thing to do is just take out that broken unit and replace it with a new one.

I remember how some years ago I had a water pump on my automobile that went wrong and I went into a garage to have it repaired and the man told me, "Well, I will put in a new one." I said, "Oh no, repair this one." And he said to me, "You cannot repair that one." He said, "When that one goes wrong, the thing you have to do is put in a new one." And I remember some time afterwards in another situation we had a refrigerator and it was operating under a warranty and within the time of the warranty, the refrigerator unit, the engine in this case, broke down. When we got in touch with the company that had sold it to us and who had given us a guarantee, they came out and looking at it, said, "We will have to replace it." They took that unit out and put a new unit in. They said it was so complicated that it would not be possible to fix it up in that way, that their policy was to put in a new one. This is the principle that we have to understand about Christian experience. The spiritual truth that is expressed in John, chapter 3, "Ye must be born again", comes in at this point. These parables make it clear that in saving, God does not mend human nature. He does not correct the old man. He does not improve our human nature. He asks us to deny it and accept the new one. "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me."

No doubt we are often misunderstood when we teach like this. If I were to say to you: We do not try to improve you. We do not try to correct you. We want to show you how you can be saved. The Christian is not a person who has been corrected. Oftentimes, he would need it and it could be well done. If it could be done, it would be a good thing, but he is not a person who has been corrected. He is not a person who has been instructed. He is not a person who has been improved. The Christian is a person who basically has been crucified with Christ, reckoned the old man dead, and received from God a new spirit in Christ Jesus. The Christian is called upon to humbly yield himself into the will of God, crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof.

As a teacher, the Lord Jesus in communicating the truth to us, used several different means. He used nature for example. And many times He would bring in the matter of history. The history of Israel would be taken as one way of showing the truth of God. But nature as a whole is used in the parables. We will be studying these parables and we will notice one instance after another of how Jesus of Nazareth took a common human occurrence and used it to illustrate the truth that He was seeking to share. He also used Scripture. You will remember how the Lord Jesus in teaching would say, "Have you not read?" Or He would say, "What saith the Scripture?" Now the Scripture has in it, for instance, in the earlier portion

of the first part of the Bible, a certain ritual that was used at the time of the tabernacle and certain teaching is involved in that, which we understand, particularly in the book of Hebrews. Then again, in the Scripture you have certain visions and these visions set forth certain truth. The Lord Jesus used parables that were based upon nature and visions which were based upon personal experience with God. Then He also, of course, used just straight revelation of God Himself. He Himself in person, in the incarnation, could show us Himself and say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." So using these different methods by the things of nature, because that would reveal to us the ways of God; the things of Scripture, because that would reveal to us the promises of God and then the things of Himself, because He was actually God incarnate. In these different ways, the Lord Jesus would be teaching us the truth as it is in God and in the Gospel of God.

Chapter 2

The Same Request Does Not Always Beget The Same Response

To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life (II Corinthians 2:16).

In this verse Paul brings out an amazing truth. The same Gospel message preached by the servant of God will on the one hand speak death to one person and speak life to another. If anyone were to give us the impression that anything that the Gospel says is going to be good for everybody, they are not telling us the truth because God is a God of justice, of holiness, of truth. He deals with us as we are. Now when I say that, it does not mean that some people are good and some people are bad. That is true, but that is not the basis of God's dealing with us and it is not that God favors the good ones and that He is against the bad ones. That is not the way it is. As a matter of fact, in the sight of God, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "There is none righteous, no not one." So God does not make the difference in His conduct, does not deal with people differently because they are different. Now we will see why when we look into this portion of His Word.

The Gospel preached does not affect everybody in the same way. It is important to remember that getting a man to come to church is no guarantee that he is going to be blessed, that he is going to turn to God. We read in Hebrews these words:

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it (Hebrews 4:2).

And so we will just simply recognize it is not enough to go to church. But there is one thing sure if they do not come to church they would never get a chance to hear the Gospel. If they do come, they might get a chance to hear it. We will try to get them to come, but if we get them to come we know there is more involved. This will keep us praying. Jesus of Nazareth taught this truth by means of a parable that is probably one of the best known parables, commonly called the Parable of the Sower and the Seed. If it were named more correctly, it would be the Parable of the Soil.

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had not root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matthew 13:3-9).

When you read that parable, it is so clear. His hearers understood every part of this. They knew

this from experience. Sowing in those days was done by hand. The seed cast by hand is allowed to fall wherever it will. Some falls on the pathway because across that field there may be a path that people have used in walking across that field, a roadbed, a wayside, so to speak and the seed that falls there does not get into the ground. That is the seed that the birds of the air come and pick up. Some fell on stony ground and this seed sprang up, but it had no roots and when the sun rose, the weather got hot, it withered away. Some fell on thorny ground. You and I might not think of thorny ground for what it is: weedy ground, good ground that was filled with weeds. The weeds, springing up, choked it out and it did not bring forth any fruit. Some fell on good ground and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. That is the message, very clear. The message is obvious because it means that the same seed produced much fruit in only one of the four different kinds of soil. The difference in the result, was the difference in the soil. That would mean that so far as we hearers are concerned, it is not the pulpit message that makes the difference so much as it is the heart in the pew that makes the difference. It is the way one listens. His disciples asked Him for His interpretation. They understood about the seed. They understood about what would happen out there in an agricultural way, but they were interested in what application He was making of it. Jesus explained:

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside (Matthew 13:18-19).

There is no doubt about it. There are some people listening who do not understand what the preacher is saying and in that ignorance the words that he is saying, the spiritual truth that he is saying, does not enter into their hearts and the enemy comes and snatches it away.

But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended (Matthew 13:20-21).

This will represent the fact that when people are listening to the preaching, they are greatly blessed. They are made happy with the thought: God is going to give me something. I am going to receive something. All I will have to do is openly say I belong to Him. I will profess His name and then I will enter into all these things. So the person comes forward at the invitation and is received into the fellowship of the church and then seeks to live the Christian life. Then there comes trouble. Sometimes the trouble is directly related to his testimony, and sometimes it is just plain trouble that everybody has. He thought when he became a Christian that there would be no more trouble, but there is trouble and more than that, there is a special kind of trouble because now people are going to ask him to act like he professed, and so on. Such people will often say, "It isn't what I thought it was", and they begin to neglect it and let it go. This represents the fact that people can listen and can seem to respond but they do not go through with it and they do not bear fruit.

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful (Matthew 13:22).

This is a sad thing. The soil was good, would have brought fruitful results, but there were so many weeds, so many other things. Finally we read:

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (Matthew 13:23).

We see in the teaching of our Lord Himself that with some who hear the Word preached, the seed of the Word does not enter because of lack of understanding. With some, the Word is received with joy but they do not take part. They do not actually commit themselves, and they are hearers only. With some

the Word is received but is choked out. The cares of this world, the joys and the pleasures and riches of this world, just take up all the time and strength that a man has and so the Word of God does not produce any results. There are too many other interests. And then we have with some the Word is received. Did you note that actually the description of the good ground is the least detailed. There is nothing much told about that. The person understood it, obeyed it, and was fruitful. The interesting thing to know is that the fruit was not the same in each case. Some was a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold, but always fruit.

The meaning is painfully obvious. The state of the heart determines the extent of the response. There was never any question about the validity of the event as described so far as the actual consequence of the preaching. The human heart could be slow to admit its application, but could not deny the truth of the description. The four types of hearers are to be found everywhere. The callous, hardened ones who do not understand the Word, and the seed is snatched away by the devil. The superficial persons who hear but do not do it. They have a quick response to what they think it means and then in the face of persecution, they quit. The preoccupied ones with riches and cares of this world and other interests crowding out the response to the Gospel. The good ground, understanding the Gospel will bear fruit.

This is a classic example of a parable and its interpretation. You could learn something if you will just notice that while the parable was written like farmers would think, in agricultural terms, the parable was not about agriculture. If you were going to study this to learn something about sowing seeds, you missed the point. The natural events described actually illustrate the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God, being invisible, needed to be illustrated in this way. This is a very good illustration of the fact that any parable is to be understood as an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Chapter 3

Not All Professing Believers Are Genuine

Let both grow together until the harvest (Matthew 13:30).

These lines are written in connection with one of the parables told by the Lord Jesus Christ which we think of as "The Wheat and the Tares." This is a short parable.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn (Matthew 13:24-30).

At the close of the last study I noted that you can think of the parable as an earthly story with a heavenly meaning; that is to say, it is a story that is based upon earthly processes that tells of some situation here in this world that we can readily see which will reveal something that is true in the spiritual realities which are heavenly and are invisible.

When we say a man who "sowed good seed in his field," we are not saying that this is the account of an actual farmer who went out and did this thing; but this is the sort of thing that could happen. The parable must be true to actual events as they occur among men. And so we read "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto." Now the Kingdom of Heaven is invisible. You cannot see it, but you can come to understand it if you look at what is round about you. The invisible is also true but this can be understood by

comparing it with the visible, that which can be seen.

Our last study set forth the processes that were involved in the communication of the Gospel. You remember that was the parable of the Sower and the Seed. The sower went forth to sow and he scattered the seed and the seed grew in various ways. In this chapter we are going to receive insight into the course of events, what actually is going to happen. The story itself is simple. A man sowed good seed in his field. Then while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares, which is a weed, tares among the wheat. When they first grew up you could not tell the difference. They all looked alike. The first blades that came out of the ground looked alike. But in the course of time when the fruit began to appear, then appeared the tares also. That is when you can tell the difference between the wheat and the tares. When the servants of the master saw the weeds out there in the wheat field, they were aghast. They went to him and said, "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? Shall we just tear them out and destroy them?" Then the master said these words, "Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." So for the sake of the wheat, so that you do not disturb the wheat, "let them both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

I have repeated the story that we may have the simple idea before us. Weeds in the wheat field? Yes. Unsaved persons in the churches? Yes. I am sorry to say that can be true. And then comes this profound truth we are going to look at. Do not press for separation now between the people who believe and the people who only say they believe. Let them both go together. They will both be in the church. They will both be in the Sunday School class. They will both be at prayer meeting. They will both be anywhere in church activities. But do not separate them now. God will separate them in due time. When the time of the harvest appears then He will do it.

We have even a more pointed interpretation than that and it is the interpretation the Lord Himself gave. You can think for yourself that the Lord had just told that parable about the wheat and the tares. It would not be so easy to be real sure what He means. Who is He talking about? How will this be understood? We read:

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matthew 13:36-43).

Here we see Jesus of Nazareth describe not only the process but also something of the course of events. It is not a common thing in a parable to have elements in the parable named or defined, but here it is. You can call them back to mind while you just think about it.

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man." The Scriptures are preached, the Bible is taught, the Gospel is set out, and it is the Son of man, Christ Jesus, who is doing this. The field is in the world, any where, everywhere, all men. The good seed are the children of the kingdom, the people who really do believe. The tares, that is the weeds, are the children of the wicked one and there are such. Let me remind you that you will not especially prosper if you spend your time trying to identify who these people are. It is not really important that we should as we go to church look around and wonder which ones are the weeds. Who are the people here who are not true? This is one time we can remember the passage that says: "Judge not that ye be not judged." But the Lord knows; and you and I should be aware of the fact that you cannot go by the appearance of people. You can begin to tell when they act. "By their fruits you shall know them." But you and I are not passing judgment on them, anyway. God is. So we turn them all

over to God, but you may well have in mind that there will be right in there with the company people who say they believe when they really do not. They claim that they are Christians and they really are not. They say the Lord Jesus is their Savior and they are not really trusting Him. But God knows who these are. You and I could very well be aware of them. Do not go by everything that people say. Some of the people that you are talking to are not genuine. The enemy is the devil. Let me pause there to underscore that. The enemy is the devil. He is just as active and more so than we are. The harvest is the end of the age. So far as living in this world is concerned, it does come to an end. Each day comes to the end. Each life comes to the end. Just living in this world, there is an end coming. At the time of the end, you will have the harvest. At the time of the harvest, then who is who, and what is what, will show up and Almighty God is the Judge and He sends out His messengers and He says gather together all those that are not real, those that are not genuine, and bind them into bundles and they will be destroyed. The harvest is the end of the world. The reapers are the angels. They are real, too. Notice that in this whole story and in the interpretation the Lord gave, the real point in this parable is about the fate of those in the church, among the believers, who are not genuine. God allows false profession of Christ to occur. Wheat and tares look alike as growing plants. You cannot tell the difference when you look at them. The difference can only be seen when the fruit appears. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

And thus we have this very sobering thought. There can be people who talk like, who act like, who profess as if they were real believers who may not be genuine. But God is not through. God will actually evaluate each one according as he is. When we think about that, we can just humbly throw ourselves upon the mercy of God and ask Him to help us to be genuinely sincere in our personal relationship with Him and then we can be blessed. We can be sure of that.

Chapter 4

Should Public Invitations Be Given, Even If Some Who Respond Do Not Follow Through?

And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted (Matthew 28:17).

This is the way it was when the Lord Jesus was here in person and it is still that way. When one tells another about the Gospel, inviting that soul to accept Christ, there is often a chance that all the effort may be in vain. Salvation is by the grace of God and is a free gift to be received by faith. But saving faith involves a genuine personal commital. And of course that is what we ask people to do when we ask them to accept Christ. We ask them to commit themselves to Him. They hear us asking, they hear our invitation and sometimes their response is not genuine, it does not last.

This proclamation, this preaching and teaching of the Gospel, may be in pulpit preaching where it is easy to see. It may be in Sunday School where it is nonetheless real. It may be among the young people, but in one way or another the Gospel is presented to the people who are listening. And yet many will openly join in response who do not really follow through to do what they profess to do in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Evangelistic series of services are planned and there is much publicity, inviting people to come to the church, and few come. Church visitation is promoted, the members of the church go out to visit the people who are not coming, and oftentimes many of them do not come. If a circle of church women have some organization of their fellowship together and members of the church are divided into various circles, as they are in some churches, and then these circles are scheduled to meet and all the women in the church are invited to attend one or another circle, many of them do not attend.

Does all this mean that the effort to promote the activity is in vain? Should we quit? Should we

have no evangelistic services because not everybody comes to them? Should we never ask people to accept Christ because some of those who do respond do not continue? Sunday School is promoted on and on in church after church, many are enrolled, not all become Christians. Is this all a mistake? Should we just not have Sunday School because everybody in it does not become a Christian? Or in the large evangelistic campaign that you have heard about, when thousands of people come forward at the invitation of the evangelist, and the record seems to show that not all of them continue in their purpose, they do not all stay in with the Gospel, does this mean that the procedure is wrong? Now in answer to this question, which I have been raising and developing here before your mind, I want to bring to you a parable that Jesus of Nazareth taught, that gives us our answer.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord (Matthew 13:47-51).

Now the message of that parable is very clear and very simple. Even as simple as it is, let me point out its major features. First of all recognize this, the world has in it a mixture of people. Now when we say the world has all kinds of people, it is very easy for some people to say, "Well God is over them all," which is true. "God made them all," which is true. "God judges them all," which is true. "Then they are all going to be saved." Oh, no! Some are going to be saved and some will not be saved. But here is a very interesting thing and important thing, God does not separate them down here. You will remember the parable of the wheat and the tares that we had in a recent study. The servant said, "Shall we go through and pull the tares out and destroy them?" He said, "No, because in pulling out the tares, you may disturb the wheat. Let them both grow together until the harvest." God does not separate the good and the evil in this world. He knows which is which. He deals with them each one as he is, but He does not separate them openly. And when the call goes out, "Come unto me" that call goes out to all men, generally.

The Gospel is preached to everybody. We say, "Whosoever will may come" and we say to all men, "Come to the Savior, make no delay." We do not know which ones are going to actually respond, but we issue the call, and the call goes out to everybody: "Come." They are not all going to come and some of those who come do not mean it, and some of those who come, after they have come they get an idea and they change their minds. You remember the parable of the Sower and the Seed. Every kernel of seed that fell to the ground did not produce anything. Some did not produce anything and some lasted only a little while. Only one of the four kinds of soil produced good fruit. So it is here. The call is to all men generally and we who are issuing the call do not know which ones will receive. There is a possibility that a mixed multitude may respond. Both godly and ungodly will mingle here on earth in such a way that it is impossible to recognize which is which. You and I will not know enough to reject the imitations, the ones that are not real. Paul could say, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel," and you and I know that is true. And this parable of the net says, "Throw the net out and bring them all in." The separation is not at the beginning, separation at the outset is not practical. I ought to be very careful, I do not start throwing out the ones I think are no good. You will remember that all blossoms on the tree do not develop into apples but you know that does not mean that the blossoms are no good. Whatever apples do come did come from blossoms, but you and I could not tell when we see the blossoms which ones are going to be apples.

Another thing you will notice here is the ungodly could easily be deceived. They could think that if they just came forward in church that is all God wanted. Actually God wanted them to open their hearts. Coming forth in church is just an open profession that they have done so. But the real thing must go on inside. In the same way that the ungodly could easily be deceived, it is just as true that the godly people could easily be discouraged. It is a very discouraging thing when you work and work with a Sunday

School class over and over, and some of them just drop out. What then? Let us not be too upset by that.

Did anybody receive anything and was there even one brought to the Lord? Then by all means cast out the net. As long as you have a chance of getting even one during all the operation of the preaching and teaching of the Gospel, both the godly and the ungodly are together and they are treated the same, they are not the same, God knows which they are but we do not know. And now let me point out again the net is designed to bring in all of them. Apparently we should approach all men alike. When we say "Come" we mean everybody. Some of them are not worthy. We do not know which they are. God knows. But we call them to come. Some will actually turn away from Him afterwards, but some will come. This is what is important. So we deal with all men in grace and with kindness, not because they are worthy, because we do not know which are which, but because our God is gracious and He said, "Whosoever will may come," so we tell the whole world. So here is the first major lesson in this parable, all may come to the call. The second lesson that you and I can recognize is judgment will be exercised but it will not be you that will do it or I that will do it, it will be God that does it. After the gathering in is finished, there will be separation. God is not mocked. Thinking may be wrong and sinful and when it is, God will know. So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from the just. The separation will be made by Him who knows more than we do. And so the lessons that we gather to ourselves from this parable: all kinds of people are in the world who may become professing Christians. No attempt in this world will be made to judge or separate them. The time of judgment will come and we may very soberly realize the ungodly, the wicked, shall be destroyed.

Chapter 5

Since God Answers Prayers Because He Is Kind, Does It Make Any Difference How I Pray?

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint (Luke 18:1).

We have been considering various parables in the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth and now I want to share with you a meditation about two parables of His that have to do with praying. In this statement, "He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" that "always" I think should be understood not meaning to say every moment of the hour for twenty-four hours of the day, to be praying, but to pray again and again and again about anything that you are praying about: that you do not stop asking the Lord about whatever it is that you are asking the Lord about.

Praying may be considered as perhaps the most characteristic activity of a believer. If you could think of any human being and say about him, "That man believes in God" you would have a perfect right to expect that that man prayed at one time or another. And praying is a matter of man on earth talking to God in heaven. The man cannot see Him, but he knows He is there and has trust and confidence in Him. Now some believers maintain a way of life that is pleasing to God, which could properly be called godly. And of course one of their basic characteristics would be that from time to time they actually devote themselves to prayer. They pray.

Praying should include a number of different elements. In any praying that we do toward God, there should be praise. When I call upon myself in my heart and mind to openly ascribe to God such aspects" of His person and such traits in His character as make Him worthy of worship, this is to praise Him for His greatness, His goodness, His power, His constant presence, His grace and mercy. These are things that are always true and they make Him worthy of me bowing down before Him and worshipping Him.

Also praying should include thanks. You and I must never forget that if I am going to come to Him today to ask Him to bless me tomorrow, I must look back to yesterday and find something yesterday that He did for which to give Him thanks. I remember not long ago, I was talking to a young man seeking to help him about his relationship with the Lord. This young man was greatly depressed. He came to me to ask me if I could tell him anything at all that would give him any reason to have any hope or confidence that God would pay any attention to him. And I said to him, "What did God do for you yesterday?" He said, "Nothing." "Well", I said, "it is very simple to tell you what God is going to do for you tomorrow." "What is that?" "Nothing .If you cannot see anything He did for you yesterday, why should you think He is going to do anything for you tomorrow?" You see what I am emphasizing is this, God is the same all the time. Now I know not every day is alike. And I know that it will be true that there are times coming up when we need special blessing. But believe me it is thanking Him for what He did yesterday that strengthens me for praying to Him for what I want Him to do for me tomorrow.

Praying will include some form of petition, when I ask God for something that I want, usually something that I cannot reach for, something I cannot get, and I want God to do it. So I come before God to ask for something I want. Sometimes I come before God to ask, and I do not even know what it is that I should ask for. I just know I need something the way things are now. I am just empty and I need something, so I come asking. The urgency for praying comes from the situation in which I am. Now the confidence for praying comes from the truth and the promises of God. There are certain basic reasons for praying we can have in mind. So much more is true than I can ever know, but there is nothing true that God does not know. And so much more is facing me than I can ever handle, but there is nothing true about what is going to come up that God cannot handle. Christ Jesus has promised to hear and answer my prayer. Much that happens is by the will of God in providence and grace, not dependent upon anything that we do. Such things did not happen because we prayed for them, but about such things we should praise God and give thanks to God for doing for us while we are asleep the very things that we need. Some of what happens to us is in response to our faith, about which this principle follows, "According to your faith, be it unto you." And some of what happens depends upon our believing, and some upon our praying. "Ye have not because ye ask not" James says. And this is what I want to touch upon now.

To help us understand this, the Lord taught by parables. The first parable I want to bring to your attention is a very well known parable.

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth (Luke 11:5-8).

That word "importunity"! I do not mind telling you that in preparing this particular message, I got up in the middle of the night and went to a dictionary to look up this word "importunity" to see what it really means. It seemed the man who wrote the dictionary must have read the Bible because that is what he used for his illustration. But he said by importunity we generally mean persistent requesting. This man asked and asked and asked and asked, so the man got up to give him the bread, not because he was a friend of his, but because that man asked so much. Apparently there is a real aspect of importance in zeal. You will notice in this parable that the occasion for this prayer was an emergency. Somebody came to visit him and he did not have food. Thus an unexpected need arose and help was needed right then. This friend came to another friend who could help. The key factor was that he needed the help right then and he persisted in asking for it. In the Old Testament in II Kings 13:18-19, we see a very interesting thing that happened. On an occasion the king came to Elisha and asked him for guidance. Elisha took some arrows and gave them to the man and told the man to smite the ground, hit the ground. He smote three times and stopped and Elisha was provoked. Then he said, "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times. Now God

will give you the victory just three times." Isn't that interesting? He should have been more persistent and there would have been more following. Paul writes in the book of Galatians, "But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing" (Galatians 4:18). The truth of the matter is that if you are praying for something needed, something that God can give you, keep it up.

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily (Luke 18:1-8).

Isn't that a remarkable parable? You are actually called upon to come again and again and again, and do not quit coming again and again and again. The problem in this parable in Luke chapter 18 is the same as the one in chapter 11. There was a need. The need could be met by somebody else and that person in need must ask for help. But the asking must be persistent in the face of discouragement. I know that all praying is not alike. It changes from time to time, but just now I am pointing out that one aspect of praying about which our Lord Jesus Christ taught two parables – persistent asking – is rewarded by God actually doing for the praying person that which would not have been done if he had not kept asking and asking and asking. Actually persistent asking is a token of active faith. What keeps me asking? God can. What keeps me asking? God said He would. What keeps me asking? I need it. Now these parables were used to teach and I want to say to everyone who reads it, let us learn. And by the way we need the grace of God in our hearts to be persistent in our requesting for need that is actually real, that we might have success in praying to God.

Chapter 6

What I Think of Myself Affects My Praying

"God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." The way I feel about myself matters when I come into the presence of God. There is much about the ways of God which I do not know, and things are true that I would never think of. Our Lord Jesus during His lifetime upon earth taught men about God, but doubtless there is much that we will not know until we get to heaven. There may be an infinite amount we will never know about God, but there is some truth about God that we can know; and that is truth for our benefit. We say about Him, "Whom to know is life eternal."

One of the difficulties involved in showing us the truth about God is that He is invisible so that we cannot look at Him to see and to understand. Another difficulty is that He is holy and pure and I am not. And what that means is that if you were to tell me in so many words something that is true about God I could easily get the wrong impression, because I could think that God would do as I would do and that would certainly not be true. "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" (I Corinthians 2:9). Paul quoted that and we have that in mind as we realize that our understanding of God is so limited.

Jesus of Nazareth used parables when He was teaching truth that was new and strange to man. In this He followed this very simple and true principle that in order to teach anything new, you have to start with something that is known and show how the new is like that which the old sets forth. One of the best known parables is the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. I expect of all the parables that we hear about and read about in the New Testament, this one will be the most commonly known to all. Luke tells

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others (Luke 18:9).

In reading this parable we are told at the very outset what it is about. I remember Dr. Torrey once announced a sermon topic that I was very much interested in because it was so long. Usually his topics were very short but this one was "How a bad man went to heaven and how a good man went to hell." It was based upon the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The story is very simple. Even though it is surprising really, we are so accustomed to it we do not pay much attention to it. We read:

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:9-14).

You hardly have to take any time to get the meaning. And yet it is astonishing when you think about it. You start out thinking again, two men went up into the temple to pray. People come to worship God. And as this parable sets out, all kinds of people. It is very important that men come to God. And they come to a place of prayer in which to pray. Just coming is not enough. It is important that a person go to church, but more is essential than just going to church. It is important that the child should come to Sunday School. But it will be more important than just that the child be in Sunday School. And it is important that the young people go to the young peoples' service, but many of you will know that many a child goes to Sunday School and really does not learn anything about God and many a young person goes to young peoples' work when actually there is nothing there to teach them about God. More than that is essential. There is more involved than what this parable says. That is about one aspect of coming to God. There may well be more, but this one is important. Luke's introduction points to the aspect in mind when Luke said He told this parable to such as trusted in themselves that they were righteous. What the Pharisee said about himself was never questioned. It was probably true when he talked about the fact that he had not done certain wrong things and that he had done certain good things. But notice how the Pharisee went about it, it says "he prayed thus with himself." The lack of praise to God. You will notice those few words recorded about the Pharisee. He did not say anything about God, he was talking about himself. The lack of praise to God for what He is, and the lack of thanks to God for what He does is obvious. I do not want to make us overly critical about the praying that we hear, but let us go beyond our problems and ourselves. Let us lift our eyes to God.

In the case of the Pharisee, his attention was focused upon himself. Now this is natural enough, it is perhaps inevitable. His thought was one of appreciation of his own virtues, and of his own achievements. Now when you come into the presence of God, you are bound to think about yourself and when he thought about his virtues, they doubtless were real. And his own achievements were doubtless considerable. And then when he went on to think about it, he based his thought on the faults of others, the failings of others, the sins of others, which he did not practice. And no doubt all of this was true, but his confidence was in himself. As Luke says, "They trusted in themselves that they were righteous." Now the parable deals with one Pharisee and one publican. It did not talk about a group of people. When praying is done it is one by one.

Another thing about this man's thought, it was based on his own record. And that was doubtless true. "I fast twice in the week." No doubt he did. "I give tithes of all that I possess." Likely he did. All this is good. And as such it would be notable to God but such thinking is not the basis of effectual praying.

Now look at the publican. "Standing afar off" the very stance shows humility, reverence. He did not think he was fit. He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven. He was conscious of his personal unworthiness, which was also true. But I want you to notice that he thought of that as he came to God. "But smote upon his breast," this is a gesture of contrition, of repentance. We may remember the Scripture that speaks to our heart, "A broken and contrite heart, the Lord will not despise." Truly coming into the presence of God, just feeling personally unworthy, unfit, and bringing that to mind, thinking about that, is a qualifying thing to do. "God be merciful to me a sinner." Here is a plea for mercy, a plea for pardon. Knowing that he is not worthy, asking God to help him. And then this remarkable word, "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other." It is a remarkable thing, isn't it?

No doubt the things that a man does or does not do matters to God. True. And those who do well will be blessed in it. True. And those who do evil will not be blessed but will be judged of God. True. But we are now thinking about the matter of coming to God in prayer. When I come to God in prayer, it is an important thing that I have in mind that in the presence of God, all my righteousness is as filthy rags. We do not know in this parable what either of these men asked for when they came to pray or what they wanted when they came to pray. What the parable brings out to us very clearly is one was rejected and one was received. It is true again for us to recognize any man may come to God. Thank God. But not in any way. And may the Lord help us to be humble when we come before Him.

Chapter 7

God Wants To Save the Soul

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15:10).

In this chapter I want to consider two parables that deal with the same truth, both in Luke 15. Of all the truth revealed in and through Jesus of Nazareth, perhaps the most precious is that He is the Savior of sinners. He came to seek and to save the lost. I remember before I was a Christian and began to read the Bible, I noticed how He said, "For I am come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." That startled me. I never thought of such a thing. I naturally thought that church people could be Christians and they were supposed to be right. If you were not right, you were not supposed to be in the church. But here He said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He said, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." And I must say I pondered what He could have meant when He said, "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." One thing was obvious, Christ receiveth sinful men. And I knew then that that could be for me.

The two parables that we are going to study are known as The Lost Sheep and The Lost Coin. In the 15th chapter of Luke there are three parables: The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Prodigal. They all point up one truth which must be very important since He told three parables to set it out and yet each one of these parables are actually misnamed. The name we give to them is not really the point that is being made. First in Luke 15 we read:

And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance (Luke 15:3-7).

Now that is a wonderful parable and it is easy to see how we can appreciate that wonderful truth. Now the

second one:

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15:8-10).

It is an easy thing to see how the reader could appreciate the first parable about the lost sheep more than the second one about the lost coin. It is so natural for any sinner to identify with the sheep. We think of the sheep going astray and I can see myself doing that very thing. It is a wonderful parable. But it is almost baffling when you think of that second one about the coin, when you realize that the coin had no sense of being lost. Then you wonder where you fit into that. Much truth can be gained by looking at the sheep and at the coin, which we are popularly inclined to do. We speak of the lost sheep and we say that the sheep knew it was lost. And we can easily think, if we know anything about sheep, that it would be in distress. It would be afraid, it would have hunger and cold and be in danger. And of course you think about the shepherd who left the ninety-nine to look for the one that was lost and then the treatment of the sheep. This means very much to me. When he found that sheep, there was no punishment. He did not go and cut a willow switch and get behind that sheep and start whipping it across its hind legs and giving it to understand, "Now you stay home from now on." There was no such punishment. It is always amazing to me that he gave no spanking to that sheep. And at the same time, he had exercised every care. I do not know of any passage in Scripture that is more comforting to me personally than when I read, "He layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." And I say to myself, "Thank God. He will carry me home." And that is exactly how I am going to get there. He did not drive that sheep home. He carried it home. What a wonderful truth.

Now look at the lost coin. The lost coin did not know that it was lost but the woman knew it was lost. And there was a diligent persistent search until she found it. There is no doubt one reason that we do not use the second parable more is because it is hard for any of us to just think of ourselves as a piece of metal like a coin would be. But now let us note why I have said that these parables are misnamed. Our names focus attention upon the sheep and upon the coin that was was lost. But this is not the actual original thrust of these parables.

It is easy to realize on second thought that these parables present the Good Shepherd. When you think about that sheep you can on second thought put your mind on the shepherd. He knew each sheep. It says he knows them by name. And he missed the one when he had ninety-nine others, but he missed that one. That should touch your heart. He knows you and if there were a thousand people in your neighborhood, He knows you. And when you are not there, He misses you. He cared about that one sheep and when that sheep was missing, he searched for it till he found it. And he treated it graciously and tenderly, and carried it home in his own strength rejoicing. All believers can appreciate and worship the Good Shepherd.

Now let us think of the lost coin. You have the seeking woman. She is the real actor in that whole parable. She becomes a symbol of the parent who is seeking the soul of her child as if it were a precious coin. The Sunday School teacher who is seeking the souls of her children, her pupils, as if they were coins. The young people's worker who thinks about those young people from the standpoint of their relationship to God. The pastor who if he is functioning as he should is concerned about the soul's welfare of his people. The church should have in mind that right in the church itself, buried right in with the ordinary routine and the debris of daily conduct and activity, there could be a lost coin. The church should seek diligently until she finds it. All believers can appreciate that each one of us do matter to our Lord. And yet this is not the primary thrust of these parables. It is not the truth being taught.

A clue is found in the context of the situation. If I take you back to the beginning of chapter 15 we read:

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them (Luke 15:1-2).

They criticized Him because He was so friendly to the sinner. The point is brought out clearly in this passage. Look for instance at verse 7, "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." That is what the Lord was teaching those Pharisees. The Pharisees were criticizing Him for being friendly with the sinners. And he told them this story to tell them that when the sheep was found and brought home, the neighbors rejoiced, there was joy in the presence of the angels of God more over that one sheep was found, that one sinner, than over the ninety-nine persons that did not need to repent. And then again in verse 10, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Since there is joy in heaven, the Lord would show joy over those returnees, those sinners that were coming to Him. And He showed them graciousness and joy because that is the way God would do.

You see the whole truth that is being pointed up in these two stories is that God wants to save the sinner. The shepherd wants the sheep to come home. The woman wants the coin. And the word from God is "Come home. Come home." All heaven is concerned about the wayward soul. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." God is eagerly waiting to bless the repentant soul. That is the point in the story. And we should show gracious kindness toward anybody, whosoever cometh unto Him. There is not a word or a note of judgment or of rebuke or of reproof or correction or chastisement or punishment in these stories. No, there is a seeking until the lost is found and a rejoicing when it is brought home. God wants us to come to Him.

Chapter 8

Any Repentant Soul Can Come To God

I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants (Luke 15:18-19).

I expect you will recognize that these were the words spoken by the prodigal. This is probably one of the best known parables in the Bible, so well known, I think, because it is so simple. It is so often remembered because it is so gracious. The message as it is commonly understood is both touching and true. A rebellious, headstrong, willful youth took himself and all that he had and squandered his assets until he had nothing left. He was reduced to poverty in its lowest level. When he hit bottom, he realized what a fool he had been. The Bible says, "he came to himself." He remembered his father was rich. I cannot help but feel in my own mind and heart that he felt deep down in his heart that his father would help him. He really had confidence in his father's grace and mercy. In repentance, he returned to his father. He came back to tell him he had done wrong. He confessed his sin. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." He acknowledged his own unworthiness. "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." He volunteered to take a place of bondage. "Make me as one of thy hired servants." And of course the wonderful part of the story is that his father received him graciously in a wonderful way. It is understandable and very natural that when we read this story, our interest should focus upon the prodigal son. I expect one reason why is because we see ourselves there so very simply and so very plainly. How often it has been true about us that we have gone on our own. We have done as we pleased. We have been willful. We have gone out and we have lost everything we had and then we have come back.

Let us remember that this parable was told by Jesus of Nazareth to show us the Father. You will remember as we read at the beginning of the 15th chapter of Luke that the Pharisees were murmuring against Him because He associated with sinners and the Pharisees criticized Him for it. They could not help but feel He was a good man and those sinners should stay away from Him. Here they were coming to Him and He was welcoming them. The three parables of this chapter: the parable of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin, which we have already studied, and this parable of the Lost Son, the Prodigal, were told to reveal one great marvellous truth, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The climax in this parable is in the welcome that was awaiting the return of the prodigal. When the Prodigal returned, there was no condemnation. This is the universal appeal of this wonderful story. As a sinner, I am to understand all heaven is waiting for me to come.

At this very point, there is a common error that is due to an oversight and I am afraid in our time the error is far greater than it has been. To understand the prodigal's welcome as it was actually told in this story it is important to recognize he was changed. When the younger son left home, he was full of himself, pride, which is sinful. He was willful. He was self-confident. He was arrogant in his attitude. When he came home, he was repentant. He was ready to confess his faults. He yielded himself. He was broken in spirit. He was humble. He was a different man. We read his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. Do not think for one moment that it was not clear that the father saw the change in him. He saw the change in him and he rejoiced. "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." It is not a matter of saying "This my son was away and now he is back, and I am so glad to have him back." No, he was dead. That is a personal condition. He was in a state where he was unresponsive to anything his father said. He was just like a dead soul so far as his father was concerned. Nothing his father wanted, nothing that his father cared for, nothing that his father would have directed him in, nothing his father would have said to him mattered to him at all. He was dead inside himself about his father. Now he is alive. He is a changed person. He is sensitive to these things. He has come back aware of all the things that his father stood for, and by the way, this was the mistaken report that was heard by the older brother.

When you are thinking of the older brother in the story of the prodigal, do not think that is something tacked on. When you read in the whole context, you can see very plainly the Lord is having in mind the Pharisees who have been criticizing Him. Here the older brother criticizes the father for his conduct. But when you think about this, I want you to see that the older brother should be understood and sympathized with. You see, when the older brother was coming home and he heard the sound of music and dancing and hilarity that was going on at home and a servant came out to meet him, he asked the servant what was going on. The servant told him something that doubtless the servant thought was true, but it was not true. The servant told him only part of the truth. He said, "Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf." You see, the way that reads it is not really deep enough. That is not really seeing the truth. The truth really was "Thy brother is changed. He is a changed person. He is different and your father has welcomed him." Now the dissatisfaction of the older brother was based on this error because he thought the father had received the prodigal as he was. I want you to recognize that while any sinner can come to God, there is no man can come to God in his sin. The sinner that can come to God is the one who is repentant. The older brother had complained because the man who had sinned was welcomed home. What he missed in there was it was not only the man who had sinned, but the man who had repented that was acceptable. The older brother's complaint would actually have been valid. I will tell you right now if a person can go out and do as he pleases and come back in and be received as if he had done nothing, something is wrong.

But this complaint, while valid in itself as he understood it, was actually out of place and you can feel this when you notice that the father did not rebuke the eldest son. I have heard many a message on this in which he was rebuked. But that is not the fact. The fact of the matter is that the older son had been

acting on a mistake and acting naturally on the idea that his father had received a sinner back home and made him welcome as if he had done right. That is not true. The father explained to the older son. He informed the older son that his brother had been dead and was alive again. His brother was changed and it was a fitting thing that they should rejoice when his brother came home. He wanted the older brother to join in this participation and he said something to the older brother that I think we sometimes pass right by. "Son, thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine." In those simple words you have a statement that will help you to understand the virtue of righteousness. There is a benefit in doing the right thing and after all, if a person does stay with the Father and do what he wants done, you have the blessing of the fellowship of God and he informed the older brother this way. He said, "Son you are always with me." We should never underestimate the importance of daily fellowship with God. It is very important. It is marvellous to have fellowship with God every day and "all that I have is thine." You may just notice in passing that when this whole story is told, the younger brother was not given another handout. He had wasted his substance and that was gone. The thing that is remarkable is he was received back when he repented. Is it not true that so often the impression is broadcast "Whosoever will come as he is will be received?" That is not true. No. Anybody can come in repentance. Yes. In contrition. Yes. God has compassion for the sinner. Let us never obscure the fact that He will condemn the sin and destroy it.

Chapter 9

What Does The Second Great Commandment Mean?

The parable of the good Samaritan, which is found in Luke, is highly esteemed and rightly so. And for us it is especially important because it answers such a basic question for the Christian – Who is my neighbor?

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself (Luke 10:25-27)

These are commonly called the First Great Commandment and the Second Great Commandment. We read on:

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my neighbor (Luke 10:29)?

In answering him, Jesus told the parable which we call the parable of the Good Samaritan.

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise (Luke 10:30-37).

This is the simple story with its remarkable truth. The first truth that is obvious is that "thy neighbor" is the person who is in need. And associated with it is the fact that it is the one I meet. I do not

meet every needy person in the world, only some. The next thing that you see is that this could be anyone. Whosoever. In other words, that person who is in need; I may not know why he is in need, and I need not know who is to blame that he is in need; I only need to see that he is in need and that I can help him.

The next thing that you see here is this very important insight that to love him is to do something for him. I wonder if you would recognize it if I would point out to you that this has no reference to your feelings. Now, the good Samaritan had feelings and we will see in a moment what those feelings were. I can tell you right now they were called compassion, but that is not what you call love. The love is to be seen in the fact that he exercised himself to do something for that man who was in need.

Now another whole line of truth that is in this parable is based on this: that I do what I can. I point out to you the good Samaritan ministered to this man's needs, according to what the situation required. He had oil for the man's wounds and bruises, like you would have salve to put on a hurt; and he had wine for physical strength, something to stimulate the man and to refresh him. Evidently these were the Samaritan's own supplies that he had brought along for his own use. Then he gave the injured man his own place on his own donkey. He took him to an inn, and cared for him personally. The next day he paid his bill as it was and pledged himself that if it would take more to give this man what he needed until he was able to go on, it was to be put on his bill; and when he came by, he would pay anything more that was necessary. The very important fact is that the Samaritan had no idea who this man was. That did not matter. What mattered was that the man was in trouble and the man had need.

He did not share his wealth with this man. He gave this man according to his needs. The account is moving as we have noted it. If you read it you could be blessed, but there is more in it. Let us look at some of the other things. You remember that in the course of the reading, there was reference to a certain priest who by chance came that way. That is the way the good Samaritan came, by chance. This just happened that way and when the priest saw him, he passed by on the other side. And then there was a Levite who came and looked on him and passed by on the other side.

These two men were related to the religious practices of the day. There is certainly something in there for you to notice. The Lord Jesus is going to put His finger exactly on this very one thing, that profession does not mean anything unless you do something about it. Saying what you believe and saying what you think, does not help any if you do not do something. You see these two men related to the religious practices as they would be, as a priest and as a Levite; they knew the law, the law of Moses, and they knew that according to that law of Moses if they would see a man in need they should help him. They would know that. Yet, they did not do anything about it. Why? They went on about their own business.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him." I do not have to labor the point that the other two did not have compassion, and this makes the big difference. When that certain priest looked on that man and saw him, there was not any compassion. He passed by on the other side. The Levite came and looked on him – no compassion. He passed by on the other side. The good Samaritan, when he saw him, had compassion on him. Such compassion was not because of the man personally, not because this man was a friend of the good Samaritan or someone he knew. As far as the good Samaritan was concerned, this man was a stranger. But there was one thing that was not strange to the Samaritan and that was the plight, the trouble that he was in; that, the Samaritan knew.

Then there comes a very simple question and you and I need to face up to it very clearly – Which now of these three was a neighbor? In the book of James you come across a passage that makes it very clear, that action speaks louder than words:

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone (James 2:15-17).

And then in the first epistle of John:

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth (I John 3:17-18).

You see it is in the action, in the doing something, that love is made perfect. It is brought to completion, it is brought to its fruit. The action actually completes the whole process.

In this parable there are pictured several typical attitudes that you should keep in your own mind. Consider the thieves, how did they feel about the man that they robbed? Was it not something like this – "What is yours is mine if I can get it"? Then consider the priest and the Levite who came and looked at him and walked on. What did they think? "What is mine is my own, I am going to keep it." Now the good Samaritan, what does he think? "What is mine is yours if you need it and I am going to give it to you." And this is what the Lord approved.

Chapter 10

The Importance Of Turning To God Now

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh (Matthew 24:44).

These are the words of Jesus of Nazareth. I realize that there are a good many different ideas abroad in the world as to how one could respond to God. In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth came to show us the ways of God. In His teaching, in the Gospel, there is a call to all men to come to God that they might be saved. But there is also in it this note "Come now. Behold now is the accepted time. Behold now is the day of salvation." That is what the Scriptures say. In II Corinthians 6:2, Paul repeats that and brings it to our attention. I remember the word of a Christian doctor that I met in Mexico City. He asked me when we were ever going to put our material into Spanish and, because I did not know for sure, when, I replied, "Oh, just as soon as" – I went on to talk and he stopped me. "Do not say that. Do not say 'as soon as, or sometime', those are not scriptural words. 'Today' is the word of the Holy Spirit." I have never forgotten that. "Today is the word of the Holy Spirit."

I remember early in my life when I was a student in Los Angeles, California, attending the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, and often I preached on the street to the passing crowd. I remember on one occasion listening to a fellow student urging them, "Do it now. You have in mind to turn to God, do it now. Tomorrow may be too late." And I remember as he was preaching that a heckler called out of the crowd, "What about turning to God at the eleventh hour?" And I remember how quickly my friend replied, "Suppose you die at ten-thirty?" And that seems to me to be an answer at all times for those who would put it off. And what is the truth here that we are thinking about? Will God wait and hold everything up for a later time, for me to decide about this?

Our Lord faced this question and told the parable of the Ten Virgins.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying,

Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh (Matthew 25:1-13).

The import of that story is very plain. It is obvious. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." The import is plain, as I say. And yet many attempts have been made to talk about it and explain it in a way that dulls the point and dissipates the thrust of that message. There is no reason why we should take time to try to identify the two groups, who are the five wise and who are the five foolish. That is not important. The important thing is that the wise were wise and the foolish were foolish. The meaning is clear. Among those who accept the truth, and all ten thought the Bridegroom was coming, all ten expected to be there for Him; but some delayed getting ready. This is the serious matter. It is so easily confused that we have a reason for the Lord telling this parable, to make it clear. The story is simple enough. Ten virgins went to meet the bridegroom. Apparently they all expected Him. This is the message then for the people who really do believe there is a God and they really do believe the things of God. Now five were wise, they took oil in their lamps which means they were ready to act. Five were foolish, they took no oil in their lamps: they were not ready; they did not expect to act now. Now these five wise expected Him any time and they would be ready; the five foolish expected Him sometime, but not now. They were wrong. Unexpectedly, at midnight, He came. "In such an hour as ye think not." The five wise with the oil were ready and they went in with Him. The five foolish had no oil and, even though they asked others to help, no one would help them at that time, and they were not ready. They missed it, and the door was shut. This aspect seems to be universally ignored.

The door was shut. You know what I mean? They did not get in. Afterwards came also the other virgins. They believed in the Bridegroom. They wanted to be with the Bridegroom and they came and asked, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." If you want to consider that prayer, you can call it prayer. You know what they got? "I know you not." This is to say the word "know" there implies: "I do not esteem you. I do not appreciate you and your request." They did not get in. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

Now this parable is obviously intended as a warning. It is a warning to people who believe. Do not put off acting on what you know to do. Is there anything you think of that you feel that you ought to do about the Bible, about praying? Do you think there is something you ought to do about inviting people to the church? Do you think there is something you ought to do about seeking to win other people to the Lord? Do not put it off; whatever you do, do not put it off. Do not put off doing what you know in your heart ought to be done. This is a snare to think that you have unlimited time. You know, this is what fools us. We are not against the things of the Lord, we just do not want to do them now. We could lose. I mean we could lose the whole thing, for no other foolishness than this, that when we knew what to do, we said, "Not yet, not today, another time." Oh, you can lose it!

How sobering this is for so many believers today! By the way, when you are thinking about even the coming of the Lord, you think about His coming back into this world in person. Now there are a great many people who will say, "Oh yes, I think He is going to come. He is going to come as Judge." They know that is what the Bible says, that is what every scriptural doctrine has always said, He is coming back. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). And so far as the Scriptures are concerned, they will imply to you, He is coming back any time. And in such an hour as you think not, He is coming back. You know what Paul said about this? In II Timothy Paul writing to Timothy said this:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Timothy 4:8).

Do you love His appearing? Are you really expecting Him? Are you looking for Him? I know there are a great many different ways of seeking to emphasize the importance of this. And many of us

think of other things. When we look round about us in the world and see all the trouble and the distress and the misery that is in the world, we remember that there is a day coming when He will come and clear it up, and some of us are inclined to say "Come quickly, Lord, come quickly." And so with different people we have different ways of thinking about the coming of the Lord, but let me tell you one thing, that those who love His appearing, those who really want the Lord to come, and are looking for it, for them there is a crown of righteousness laid up. And at this point we do well to say to ourselves, "Let no man deceive you by any means." I tell you the biggest snare that anybody could ever fall into is the idea – I have plenty of time, I will do it tomorrow. You may not have tomorrow. One more time, let me urge it upon you, "For in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh." In dealing with God, do not put it off. Today is the day, now is the time, and may God help each one of us to turn now to Him.

Chapter 11

Would An Ordinary Person Ever Be Responsible To Serve God?

When Jesus of Nazareth walked with His disciples, He showed them many truths about Almighty God. He did not reveal everything. On one occasion He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you but you cannot bear them now." Some of what He revealed would seem so impossible to those who heard it, or some so unlikely that He used parables to make clear what He meant. In the parable of the Ten Virgins that we studied, we noted that the Lord emphasized that He would return suddenly. And now in this study we are going to consider a parable in which the Lord revealed that God will judge.

Perhaps this message has special meaning for those who believe. But it is true for everyone. God will not only send Christ Jesus here again, but He will be sent to judge the quick and the dead. As creatures of God, we are responsible to Him. Christ Jesus will not only return but He will come to judge. Paul told Timothy about the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing in His kingdom. He told the Corinthians, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." In teaching His disciples this truth, Jesus of Nazareth used the parable of the talent.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods (Matthew 25:14).

God actually puts into our control certain things that belong to Him. He exercised Himself as Almighty God and as sovereign of all when He called His own servants and delivered unto them His goods.

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey (Matthew 25:15).

The gifts, the assignments, were graduated. Not all were the same size. And each one was given to each person according to his own personal ability.

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents (Matthew 25:16).

This is simply to say that he was diligent, went to work.

And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into

the joy of the lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord (Matthew 25:17-23).

Did you notice that the words that He spoke to the one who had gained five talents, and the word that He spoke to the one who had gained two talents, were exactly the same? He gave the same appreciation and the same recognition to the man who had gained two as to the man who had gained five. Each of them was diligent, each went out and worked; and each made a profit so to speak: make a gain according to his ability.

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine (Matthew 25:24-25).

Remember this man had only received one talent. He probably had the least ability because he had received the least amount. And if you will note in the things that he said he actually criticized his Lord. He actually implied that he did not exactly trust in Him. He knew that He was a hard man and that He reaped where He did not sow and that He gathered where He had not strewed. And then he says that he was afraid and he went and hid that talent in the earth. "Lo, there thou hast that is thine."

His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant (Matthew 25:26).

Does that seem rough to you? In what sense would he be wicked? In what sense would he be slothful? We can tell something about that, we could say to ourselves "He was just scared." Oh! but there is something else and it is involved in these words:

. . . thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury (Matthew 25:26-27).

You could have done better than you did.

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath (Matthew 25:28-29).

Isn't that a heavy statement? When he did not use the opportunity given to him, he lost everything including the opportunity he had to begin with. And then we read this sad word:

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30).

Each person is assigned a specific responsibility, an opportunity, a privilege. Now it will vary with different people. But God who gives you that task knows what you can do. There are differences in personal ability, and there are differences in personal responsibility. Each to his own. And Almighty God has given to me that which is to be done, that I could do, and He will give time for anyone of us to work out his own salvation. You and I will each have the opportunity and we will have the time; He will leave us here, to carry out the assignment given to us. God will come to judge the results of each person's stewardship. Some will be diligent and industrious and they will gain. Some will decide that it is not necessary to attempt it. It is too risky. It is too dangerous. And we will just let Him have back what He gave us. That is not good. God will appreciate the results of diligent effort to use the opportunity that I have and He will reward the faithful servant. But God will judge and condemn the servant who did not try

and will take away what he had and cast him out. I know this sounds strange to us who have the Gospel in our heart. It is strange because so many of us are so inclined to think things out to where we can say for sure that if you belong to the Lord that is that. You are His and that is forever. Wait a minute! That may be true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. You have responsibility. I would say something like this: that your faithfulness, your obedience actually is part of your faith. Note it again. "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." By being faithful and diligent here on earth a person can win eternal benefit in heaven. By being unfaithful, lazy, if I just do not do what is in my hand to do, I can lose everything, even that which I had in the beginning, and myself as well. It matters to God what I do and how I do. This is the way the Lord Jesus taught it when He told the parable of the talent.

Chapter 12

Do You Think I Could Offend God?

Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, 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 (Luke 14:21).

These words are part of a parable told by Jesus of Nazareth in which He showed how God feels about the way in which people treat His invitation to them. The wonderful truth of the meekness and the kindness of God in Christ has blessed many hearts, but it has seemed to inspire some with the idea that God is soft, that a person could take any advantage of His mercy and still could come to Him any time, be acceptable to Him. This impression is a grievous error: God is not mocked. That this is true in the matter of how the Gospel is treated, is taught by Jesus of Nazareth in parables.

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests (Matthew 22:1-10).

I often wonder why we do not hear more about it. In verse 3 you can see that He sent forth His servants, and they gave the invitation; but the people would not come. Can't you just think of the Gospel preaching that you have heard when people have been invited to come to the Lord, and have been sitting right in the pews knowing perfectly well that this is what they should do: but they did not do it?

Now notice in verses 4-6 a second invitation was given and that too was spurned. The messengers were abused, even killed. Now notice in verse 7, "The king was wroth." This is the very person that invited them. The very person that made this feast ready and invited them in, now is angry. He was wroth and He destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

But His purpose is going to be fulfilled. After all He was going to have a wedding feast, and He is going to have it. So in verses 8-9 come these remarkable words, "The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." Here you can see how the Gospel is taken out to the whole wide world, and all people are invited to come. "So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they

found, both bad and good." They took everyone, "whosoever will" may come. And they came both bad and good. Isn't that interesting? It reminds you of the parable of the net when it was thrown out into the sea and brought in all manner of fish, both good and bad. And here the invitation is sent out and brings in all manner of people, both bad and good. "And the wedding was furnished with guests."

There is in this story a related incident that follows and it emphasizes how God feels about those who respect Him, who honor Him. This is the very familiar story of the man who did not have a wedding garment.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment (Matthew 22:11).

I think we ought to remember that it was the custom in those days when the guests would be brought in they would be given garments to wear so that the circumstances could be gay and brilliant. And so there was a wedding garment available.

And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 22:12-14).

What is the point in this? One person in coming did not respect the host, did not appreciate the privilege that he had. Neglecting to honor God as host will disqualify me or anybody else.

Does it make any difference how one acts towards God? It certainly does. Paul marvelled that he had been accepted because he had been a blasphemer and injurious but then he realized and he said, "But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief." Can one be too casual in worshipping God? Obviously. Wearing a wedding garment would honor the host and when the man did not honor the host, he was put out. To neglect to put it on was unacceptable and caused rejection. Much the same truth as we have seen in this chapter 22 in the Gospel according to Matthew is to be found in the Gospel according to Luke. In Luke 14 we find it is put in the form of a man who had prepared a supper, a great supper.

In his record Luke has grouped together several truths dealing with our response to the call of God as we come to Him. The teaching is so clear I only need to draw your attention to the passages and we can note the truth. First in chapter 14 look from verses 7 to 11 and here you have plain advice about how to act when you are invited. When you are receiving an invitation, a favor, an invitation is extended to you to come and share in a feast, He says to go and sit down in the lowest room. In other words be careful that you do not seek something for yourself. "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11). This is true in any situation, not only with coming to a feast, any time, anywhere. When you are receiving from God an opportunity, be humble, take a lower place. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Then notice in chapter 14 verses 12-14 this advice: "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind": people who cannot repay you. And if you will be gracious to them, this is the way to lay up treasures in heaven. Why is this so important? That is the way God does. That is the way He did with us. He called us in, although we were poor and crippled and lame and blind. He called us in and if we have His Spirit in us we will act that way toward other people. This is the way to lay up treasures in heaven. Then in chapter 14 in verses 16-24 was the great invitation and here again is the picture of preaching the Gospel. Here this man made a great supper, which would be a time of blessing and a joy and celebration and bade many. Look at verse 17: "Come; for all things are now ready. " Have you not heard that over and over again when the Gospel is preached? "Come, everything is ready, it has all been done for you. Christ has died for you and His sacrifice has been received. The way is now open." In verse 18: "And they all with one consent began to make excuse." The first said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it": for business reasons I cannot come. The second said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen; and I go to prove them": for business reasons, I cannot come. "I have married a

wife": for social reasons I cannot come. All began to make excuses. Verse 21: "Then the master of the house being angry." This kind of thing offends God. If He calls me and I do not come I will offend Him. "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." And they did this and came and told Him. "Yet there is room." Then He said, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Have you ever wondered why it is that so many people respond to the Gospel that do not seem to be prominent folks? Have you ever had the feeling that people that are very limited and people who in themselves do not amount to much all seem to come to receive the Gospel, and they have such great joy? This is part of the truth. And mind you the sober thought we must not miss in this whole parable – "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." If the invitation is treated lightly, He can shut out those who rejected the invitation. "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." The invitation from God is to be appreciated and to be received with joy. And may the Lord help us to respond to His call.