

The Wedding Garment

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 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 22:11-14](#).

APPARENTLY the parable of the marriage feast would have been complete without this addition, but there was infinite wisdom in appending this sequel. This is seen practically in the experience of the church of God. Those who are permitted to see large additions to the church will find this parable of the wedding garment to be singularly appropriate and timely. Whenever there is a revival and many are brought to Christ, it seems inevitable that at the same time a proportion of unworthy persons should enter the church. However diligent may be the oversight there will be pretenders creeping in unawares who have no true part or lot in the matter, and hence, when the preacher is most earnest for the ingathering of souls to Christ, he needs to couple therewith a holy jealousy, lest those who come forward to make a profession of faith should be moved by carnal motives, and should not really have given their hearts to God. We must use the net to draw in the many, but all are not good fishes that are taken therein. On the threshing floor of Zion the heap is not all pure wheat, the chaff is mingled with the grain, and therefore the winnowing fan is wanted. God's furnace is in Zion, and there is good need for it, for the gold is yet in the ore and needs to be separated from the dross. Wood, hay, and stubble building is quick work, but it is a waste of effort; we need continually to examine our materials, and see that we use only gold, silver, and precious stones. It is most needful in times of religious excitement, to remind men that godliness does not consist in profession, but must be proved by inward vitality and outward holiness. Everything will have to be tested by a heart-searching God, and if, when he comes to search us, we are found wanting, we shall be expelled even from the marriage feast itself; for there is a way to hell from the very gates of heaven. In a word, it is well for all to be reminded that the enemies of the great King are not only outside the church, but they are even in it; while a part refuse to come to the wedding of his Son, others press into the banquet and are still his foes. May God grant that this subject may have a heart-searching effect. May it be as the north wind when it blows through the marrow of the bones. May it lead us to

desire to be searched and tried of God, whether we are truly in the faith, or are reprobates in his esteem.

The parable may be discoursed upon under five heads. Here is *an enemy at the feast*; here is *the king at the feast*; that king becomes *the judge at the feast*; and hence the enemy becomes *the criminal at the feast*; and swiftly is removed by *the executioner at the feast*.

I. We see in the text AN ENEMY AT THE FEAST.

He came into the banquet when he was bidden, but he came only in appearance, he came not in heart. The banquet was intended for the honour of the son, but this man meant not so; he was willing to eat the good things, but he intended no respect to the prince. He did not, like others, say, "I will not come, for I will not have this man to reign over me"; but he said, "I will come, but it shall be in such a way that the royal purpose shall not be served, but rather hindered. I shall be present as an onlooker, but take no share in the ceremony; I will, on the contrary, show that I have no care for the business in hand, except so far as it serves my turn." The man came in full exercise of self-will and self-love. He resolved to yield no homage, but to assert his independent self-sovereignty. He would show the king even at his table, where his bounties were so largely dispensed, that he was not afraid to affront him. When he came to the door of the feast, he found the guests all putting on the garment suitable for the marriage banquet. As here, in our own country, at a funeral, each mourner is expected to put on the articles of mourning which are provided, so at the wedding feast each person was expected to wear the bridegroom's favours, the garment which, as a badge, marked him as an attendant at the wedding, and as one who rejoiced in it. While others cheerfully put on this wedding dress the traitor would not; he resolved to defy the rules of the palace, and to insult the king by appearing in his own garments. He scorned to wear the livery of respectful joy, he preferred to make himself conspicuous by his daring insolence. The badge was intended to show that the wearer was a real participator in the joy of the feast, and for that very reason he would not put it on. He did not acknowledge the king nor the prince, nor care one atom about the gladsome event. He had no objection to be there, to eat the dainties, or recline upon the seats, and see the pomp and the show, but he was only in it, and not of it; he was there in body, but not in spirit. Are there not crowds of people whose union to the church is nothing better than an insult to God? Custom sways them, and not sincere faith. They have no regard to the great Head of the church or to the heart-searching God. They treat church membership as a trifle, and have no tenderness of heart touching the matter. They, in effect, say, "The table of the Lord is contemptible." "Spots are they in our feasts, feeding themselves without fear."

Many a time the question has been asked: "What was the wedding garment?" It is a question which need not be curiously pried into. So many answers have been given that I conclude that if our Saviour had intended any one specific thing he would have expressed himself more plainly, so that we would have been able, without so much theological disputing,

to have understood what he meant. It seems to me that our Lord intended much more than any one thing. The guests were bidden to come to the wedding to show their respect to the king and prince; some would not come at all, and so showed their sedition; this man came, and when he heard the regulation, that a certain garment should be put on, comely in appearance and suitable for the occasion, he determined that he would not wear it. In this act of rebellion, he went as far in opposition as they did who would not come at all, and he went a little further, for in the very presence of the guests and of the king he dared to declare his disloyalty and contempt. Alas, how many are willing enough to receive gospel blessings, but they are still at enmity with God and have no delight in the only Begotten Son. Such will dare to use the forms of godliness, and yet their hearts are full of rebellion against the Lord. The wedding garment represents anything which is indispensable to a Christian, but which the unrenewed heart is not willing to accept, anything which the Lord ordains to be a necessary attendant of salvation, against which selfishness rebels. Hence it may be said to be Christ's righteousness imputed to us, for alas, many nominal Christians kick against the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of the Saviour and set up their own self-righteousness in opposition to it. To be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but having the righteousness which is of God by faith, is a very prominent badge of a real servant of God, and to refuse it is to manifest opposition to the glory of God, and to the name, person, and work of his exalted Son. But we might with equal truth say that the wedding dress is a holy character, the imparted righteousness which the Holy Spirit works in us, and which is equally necessary as a proof of grace. If you question such a statement, I would remind you of the dress which adorns the saints in heaven. What is said of it? "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Their robes therefore were such as once needed washing; and this could not be said in any sense of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; that was always perfect and spotless. It is clear then that the figure is sometimes applied to saints in reference to their personal character. Holiness is always present in those who are loyal guests of the great King, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Too many professors pacify themselves with the idea that they possess imputed righteousness, while they are indifferent to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. They refuse to put on the garment of obedience, they reject the white linen which is the righteousness of saints. They thus reveal their self-will, their enmity to God, and their nonsubmission to his Son. Such men may talk what they will about justification by faith, and salvation by grace, but they are rebels at heart, they have not on the wedding dress any more than the self-righteous, whom they so eagerly condemn. The fact is, if we wish for the blessings of grace, we must in our hearts submit to the rules of grace without picking and choosing. It is idle to dispute whether the wedding garment is faith or love, as some have done, for all the graces of the Spirit and blessings of the covenant go together. No one ever had the imputed righteousness of Christ without receiving at the same

time a measure of the righteousness wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. Justification by faith is not contrary to the production of good works: God forbid. The faith by which we are justified is the faith which produces holiness, and no one is justified by faith which does not also sanctify him and deliver him from the love of sin. All the essentials of the Christian character may be understood as making up the great wedding garment. In one word, we put on Christ, and he is “made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

The wedding garment is simply mentioned here as being a test of loyalty to those who came to the marriage feast, and as a mode by which rebellion was avowed and loyalty made apparent. Here was a man then who came into the gospel feast, and yet refused to comply with the command which related to that feast. He willfully preferred self to God, his heart was full of enmity and pride, he despised the gifts of grace, he scorned the rule of love, he stood a defiant rebel even at the banquet of mercy which his king had spread.

His sin lay, first of all, in coming in there at all without the wedding garment. If he did not mean to be of one heart with his fellow guests and his lord, why did he come? If a man does not intend to yield himself up to God’s will, why does he profess to be of God’s church? If a man is not saved by the righteousness of Christ, why does he profess to be a believer in Christ? If he will not be obedient to Christ’s holy will, why does he pretend to be follower of Christ? It is a grave mistake for any person to imagine that he can be in the church of God to his own advantage unless his heart is renewed, unless he means what he declares, and sincerely loves the rule under which he professes to put himself.

The intruder’s sin was aggravated by the fact that after he had unlawfully come into the feast he still continued there without the wedding robe. He does not appear to have had any compunction, or to have thought of amending his error. Only when the king came in and said, “Take him away,” had the insolent rebel any idea of removing. Had he come in there, as I fear some of you have come into the church, under a mistake, thinking that there was no need of the wedding dress, when he looked around and saw all other persons wearing it, and observed that it was the peculiar mark of a guest, he would have felt uneasy and have gone to those who kept the royal wardrobe to get such a robe for himself; and then his sin in the matter would not have been laid to his charge. But he persisted in remaining where he was, and as he was. O my dear hearers, if you have already perpetrated the sin of union with the visible church of God without having the prerequisites, without being indeed submissive to God in heart and desirous to honour Christ, I entreat you, seek what is wanted, seek faith in God, seek a new heart, seek holiness of life, seek to become a loyal subject of the King, and be not content until you have these things, for the King will soon come in: he gives you time as yet, may he also give you grace to see to it that, being now where you ought never to have been, you may yet make your position a right one by obtaining that which will justify you in remaining where you are. The guest in his own clothes was a speckled

bird amongst that company, it was possible for him even then to have become one of them; but he would not, he continued to defy the King.

This persistence he retained though he probably knew the fate of those who had refused to come. He knew that the king had sent forth his armies and destroyed those wicked men who had molested his messengers, and yet he dared to recline at his ease in the very teeth, and defying the terrible power of the monarch. He made his brow as brass and hardened his heart as adamant, and forced his way into a position where his seditious spirit would be able to display itself conspicuously. He said within his soul, "I care nothing for this marriage. I will make sport of it; I will intrude myself into that feast and show my contempt. I will take the provisions, but the son shall have no honour from me, and the king shall not find me bend my will to his command." Thus he had the audacity to disport himself as a willful rebel at the feast of mercy. Are there any such among you here? The tendency will be for those who are not so to begin to condemn themselves. I know already one who has said, "I am that guest that had not on a wedding garment." She is not that one, for she is not even a member of the church, and therefore it cannot concern her; but many like her write bitter things against themselves. Another will be saying, "I am that one," whereas, if there be one that lives near to God and whose desire is to be like Christ, and to be in all things conformed to the divine will, he is the man. You who are most assuredly right will probably be suspicious that you are not, and you who are insincere and have never submitted yourselves to the will of God will probably say, "What does it matter? I am doing as well as others, I give as much, I attend the means as much, surely there can be no cause for concern in me." God grant that you may feel anxiety and fear before the Lord.

II. We pass on to the next point—THE KING AT THE FEAST.

"The king came in to see the guests." What an honour and privilege this was to the poor creatures whom his royal munificence had brought together! Was it not indeed the chief point of the entire festival? One of our greatest joys is to sing—

The king himself comes near
And feasts his saints today!

What would church fellowship be if it had not the fellowship of God with it? To sit with my dear brethren and rejoice in their love is exceedingly delightful; but the best wine is fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The king did not provide the banquet and leave his guests to eat by themselves, but he "came in," and into every gospel church gathered according to his command the King will come. I am sure the most fervent desire of this church is that the King may personally visit us. We trust he is with us, but we want him yet more fully to reveal himself. Our cry is, "Come, great King, with all thy glorious power, with thy Spirit and with thy glorious Son, and manifest thyself to us as thou dost not unto the world."

When the king came into the banqueting chamber *he saw the guests*, and they also saw him. It was a mutual revelation. Ever sweet is this to the saints, that their God looks upon them; his look brings no terror to our minds when we are loyal and loving. “Thou God seest me” is sweet music. We desire to abide for ever beneath the divine inspection, for it is an inspection of unbounded love. He sees our faults, it is to remove them; he notes our imperfections, it is to cleanse them away. Behold me, O great King, and lift up thine eyes upon me, accepting me in the Beloved. What joy it is to us who are saved in Christ Jesus that we also can see him! “Through a glass darkly,” I grant you we behold him, for as yet we are not fit to behold the full splendour of his Godhead! but yet how sweetly doth he reveal himself to our souls and unveil his eternal love. Then it is that the feast is most fully a banquet of wine, when the banner of love waves over us, and the king’s voice fills us with unspeakable delight.

“The king came in to see his guests.” This, I say, was the crowning point of the entire banquet. Observe that he came in after they were in their places. They did not see him before they had entered his halls. When an inferior entertains a superior he always advances to the door to meet him and waits until he comes. If her Majesty the Queen were entertained by one of her nobles, he would be in waiting, and at the threshold would meet her; but when a superior entertains an inferior the inferior may take his seat at the table, and when all is ready the noble host will come in. It is so in the banquet of mercy. You and I see nothing of God, by way of communion with him, until first we have been brought in by the message of mercy to the marriage-feast of the gospel; for, indeed, until then a sight of God would strike us with terror—

“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind;
But when Immanuel’s face appear,
My hope, my joy, begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins.”

When I get to the banquet of mercy, then it is that I can dare to look at the King of kings, but not until then. What a joyous sight, a vision of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory as he appears in the gospel, feasting us upon his fatlings. An incarnate God makes God visible to us and makes us happy in the sight. “How canst thou see my face and live?” was the old question, but, behold, it is answered this day. At the marriage union of Christ with his people we see the face of the King in his beauty, and our souls not only live, but we have life more abundantly.

Observe, dear brethren, that the King has special times for this. He is not always in the festal chamber; to our sorrow we sometimes miss the King's presence at his table. We have the ordinances always, but we do not always enjoy the God of ordinances. The means of grace are abiding, but the grace of the means will come and go according to the sovereign good pleasure of our God. The King has his times of coming in. These are glad times to his people, but they are trying times to the mass of professors. When are these times? So far as unworthy guests are concerned, the times of God's visitation are those seasons when character is manifested. All times and periods do not reveal character. A lion may lie all day asleep, you may scarce know but what it is tame; but when the night brings the time for it to go forth to its prey, then it howls, and displays its ferocity. And so an ungodly man may lie down in the church of God with the lambs of the flock, and nothing may lead you to suspect his true character, but when the time comes for him to make profit by sin, or to get pleasure by sin, or to escape from persecution by sin, then you find out what he is. These providences are the King's coming in to scrutinize the guests. Changes in the conditions of the church, changes in the condition of the individual, all sorts of providential events go to make up the great sieve by which the wheat and the chaff are separated.

A great and most solemn coming in of the King to see the guests is, when having looked over the church, unknown to us, he decides that such and such a hypocrite has had space enough for repentance and time enough for mischief, and must now be summoned to the dread tribunal by death. The time when the King comes in to see his guests is not the last judgment, for that is the coming of the Son and not of the Father, and if it were intended in the parable, we would read that *the prince* came in to see his guests. We are led to view the King himself as continually judging professors and detecting the rebels who place themselves among the saints; by this judgment of God men are taken away from the church in their transgressions, bound hand and foot, and cast into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. I do not know, my dear brethren, when God may be visiting this church, and taking away the men that are rebels in our midst, but I do know that when professors die it is not certain that all of them sleep in Jesus; but some of them are rooted up, like tares from among the wheat, and are bound up in bundles to burn. The division is going on constantly. The King's presence is known to believers in the joy which they feel, but it is made known to hypocrites by his cutting them off and appointing them their portion in eternal woe.

If, however, there is any one time when we may be quite sure that the King comes in to see the guests, it is after large ingatherings from the world, for notice here, when the servants had gathered in guests in large numbers, it was then that the king came in. Now it will be after the time of revival which we are feeling just now, when I hope a great many will be added to the church, that the Lord will search and sift us. If there has been no visitation of

the church before for purposes of love or judgment—for they go together—we shall be quite sure to have such a visit from the great Lord himself at this time.

III. Solemnly think of THE JUDGE AT THE FEAST.

To all the rest at the festival he was the king, the beloved monarch, the munificent donor of a splendid banquet, and all eyes feasted as they looked at him: it was joy enough to behold the king in his beauty, and to see his Son with all his royal jewels on, attired for the wedding feast; but he was a judge to the hypocritical intruder. The day of comfort to his saints is also the day of vengeance of our God. He who comes to comfort all that mourn comes at the same time to smite the rebellious with a rod of iron.

The judge begins, as you perceive, by *seeing*, “He saw there a man.” What eyes are those of Omniscience! The parable represents but one such man as present, yet the All-seeing King saw him at once, he fixed his flaming eyes on that one. I suppose it was a greater crowd than this, but the king fixed his eyes on the solitary offender at once. Does the parable speak of only one because we may expect to find only one hypocrite in a church? Alas! there have been many such at the wedding feast, but one only is mentioned to show us that if there were but one, God would find him out; and, being many, the sinners in Zion may be the more sure that they will not escape. It is possible that none of the guests may have noticed the man’s garments; the parable makes no remark upon any expostulations made to him by others; perhaps they were all so taken up with the sight of the king, and so glad to be at the feast themselves, that they had no heart to make remarks upon others. But this is certain, that the king detected at once the absence of what was requisite to the marriage feast. It was not the presence of anything offensive, but the absence of something which was requisite. He did not say to the unworthy guest, “Thou hast rags upon thee,” or “thou art filthy.” or “thou hast an unwashed face”; he enquired solely into the absence of the peculiar badge which denoted a loving guest. God will judge, and does continually judge his church upon this question, the absence of what is absolutely necessary to being a Christian, the absence of honouring the Son, and obeying the Father. O soul, if thou art a professor of religion, and yet dost not love Jesus, and dost not fear the great King of kings, thou lackest the wedding robe, and what dost thou here? The King will see at once that thou lackest it. Thy morality, thy generosity, thy high sounding prayers, ay, and even thine eloquent discoursings, these cannot conceal from him the fact that thy heart is not with him. The one thing needful is to accept loyally the Lord as King.

The king next began to deal with the rebel. Note how he spoke with him. He took him on his own ground. It was too high a day for the king to use rough speech; the man pretended to be a friend, and he addressed him as such, but though the word I doubt not was uttered softly, it must have stung him if he had any feeling left. Judas exemplified in his own person this character. When he gave the Saviour the traitor’s kiss, our Lord addressed him as “friend.” He pretended to be a friend. A friend, indeed, to insult his king at his own table,

and to select for the insult the delicate occasion of the prince's marriage to which he had been hospitably invited! This was infamous! Friend indeed! Where will you find enemies if such shall be called friends? The king put it to him, "How camest thou in hither?" What business hast thou here? What could have induced thee so maliciously to defy me? To smite me in my tenderest point, and mock my guests, and trample on my son? Didst thou intend such daring insolence? "How camest thou in hither? In *hither*? Was there nowhere else to pour forth thy sedition, no other spot in which to play the traitor? Needest thou come into my palace, and to my table, and before my son on his wedding day to reveal thy enmity? Was there a need to do this?" So may the Lord say to some of us. "Were there no other ways to sin, but that you must profess to be my servant when you were not so? Were there no other bowls that you could drink from, that ye must profane the cups of my table? Was there no other bread that you could put into your wicked mouths but the bread that represents the body of my Son? Had you nowhere else to sin in that you must needs sin in the church? Could you do nothing else to show your spite but that you must make a lying profession of faith in my Son, who bled upon the cross to redeem the sons of men? Could you assail me nowhere else but through the wounds of my only-begotten Son? Could you vex my Spirit by no other means than by pretending to be my friend, and thrusting yourself in hither, while defiantly rejecting that which was necessary to do me honour, and to do my Son honour, at the festival of my grace?" I dare not dwell upon the topic. I give you the text; I pray that your conscience may preach the sermon.

Notice however, one thing, and that is, that the king, when he thus turned a judge, dealt with this man only about himself. "How camest *thou* in hither?" Did I hear a whisper in some one's mind, "Well, if I am unfit to be a church member, there are a great many others who are in the same condemnation." What is that to you? See to thyself! When the king came in to see the guests he did not say to this man, "How came yonder persons here without the wedding garment?" His dealings were personal with him alone: "How camest *thou* in hither, not having on the wedding garment?" Professor, look to thyself, look to thyself. Let thy charity begin at home. Cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then mayst thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. He fixed on the one man, made him his entire audience, and directed to him the solemn question, "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" Ah, my dear hearers, as the pastor of this church it has been a very great joy to me to see our numbers increased; many have been added to us, and many have gone forth from us to form other churches; my joy has been constant in God concerning this matter. Our beloved brethren associated with me in office have done their best to keep any of you back who have sought membership in whom we could see no fruits corresponding. We have not used our office deceitfully; as in the sight of God we have tried to be neither too severe nor too lax, but for all that I cannot but know that there are some of you who are not Christians though you bear the name. Like those of old, you say you are Jews and are not, but do lie. I

am not now speaking of any who have fallen into sin and have suffered our rebuke, or have been separated from us by excommunication and yet remain in the congregation; I mean others of you whose lives are all that could be desired openly, and yet there is a worm at the heart of your profession; you are not vitally godly, you have a name to live, and you keep that name untarnished as yet, but you are dead. Search ye yourselves; do not from this tabernacle descend into hell; let your prayer be, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." I am as concerned about myself as about you, that I should be found "accepted in the Beloved;" lest after having preached to others I myself should be a castaway! Do let it be a matter of solemn anxiety with each one. If you have never come to Jesus, come now; if you have never sought holiness of life, seek it now. If you have never had the wedding garment, it is yet procurable; go ye to him who freely gives it, the Lord will not refuse you; go to-day and he will accept you.

IV. He who was the unworthy guest is now THE CRIMINAL AT THE FEAST. The king has now become a judge to him; the question has been personally put to him, and he is *speechless*. Why is he silent? Surely it was because he was convicted of open, undeniable disloyalty. No evidence was required; he had come there on set purpose with malice aforethought to display his disloyalty, and had done so in the presence of the King. I do not think he represents at all a person who enters the church through ignorance, with a sincere but ignorant intention, but he portrays one who makes a profession without care to make it true—willfully despising the Lord's commands. He is a man willing to be saved by grace, and professing to be so, but refusing to acknowledge his duty to God and his obligations to the Son. He was speechless; he could not have chosen a worse place, nor a more impertinent method of ventilating his disloyalty than that which he selected; there was nothing he could say in self-defense. At that moment, when the King looked him through and through, he saw the full horror of his position; his loins were loosed, like Belshazzar of old when he saw the handwriting on the wall; he saw now that his time to insult was over, and the day of retribution had come. He was taken in the very fact, and could not escape. He had been guilty of a superfluity of naughtiness, of an unnecessary extravagance of wickedness in coming into the feast to air his pride. He had committed a suicidal intrusion. He might have kept himself away at any rate, and not have thrust himself into the Judge's presence. He saw now that the cause of sedition was hopeless, the King was there and he was in his power and none could rescue him. Why did he not burst into tears? Why did he not confess the wrong? Why did he not say, "My king, I have insulted thee, have pity upon me"? His proud heart would not let him. Sin made him incapable of repentance. There is a verse in one of Hart's hymns which runs thus—

"Fixed is their everlasting state:
Could they repent, 'tis now too late."

That is true enough, but it supposes an impossibility, and I think it would have been far better to have said—

“Fixed is their everlasting state;
They can’t repent, ‘tis now too late.”

Because the sinner goes on to sin he continues still to suffer; he will not turn, he cannot turn. As the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, so when sin has reached its height the man cannot bend, or bow, or retrace his steps. Oh, if he could have repented even then! But he could not; and the tears that came after the king had pronounced the sentence were no tears of penitence, but only of despairing pride. He stood speechless. It was not only that he had no excuse, but he would not confess his wrong. Have I anyone here in such a condition of heart, that while he has been sinning by making a false profession, and knows it, yet he sullenly refuses to confess his fault? Yield thee, man! Yield at once. Fall at the King’s feet at once. Even if you are not a hypocrite, if you have any suspicion that you are, fall down and say, “My King, make me sincere; I submit myself to thy will, and am ready to put on the wedding badge; if there is any method by which I can honour thy Son, I cavil not at it; let me wear his colours, and be known by all men to be truly a lover of the great Prince.”

But now, lastly, while he stood speechless in the king’s presence, the king gave place to THE EXECUTIONER, for he uttered these words, “*Bind him hand and foot.*” He was lawless, make him feel the law; he said, “I am free, and I will do as I like,” let him never be free again; bind him, pinion him. Executioner, do your duty, prepare him for death. Alas, there are some who are bound and pinioned even before the breath is out of their bodies. In their dying hours false professors have often found that they could not pray, and could not repent; like dying Spira, that arch-hypocrite and apostate, they have been sensible of misery, but not penitent, and no gospel promise has availed to comfort them. Their hearts were seared, they were twice dead before they were dead. Then came the sentence, “*Take him away,*” which is sometimes executed by the church in her excommunications—deceivers are taken away from the gospel feast by just discipline; but which is more fully carried out in the hour of death when the man’s hope fails him. Ah, sirs, what will ye do if ye have no true grace in your hearts when you are taken away from the Lord’s table, taken away from the baptism in which you gloried, taken away from the doctrines of the gospel which you understood so well by head, but which you did not know in your heart. John Bunyan’s description of the man dragged by seven devils, bound with cords, comes up before my mind. “Bind him hand and foot and take him away.” How thankful I am that the servants who brought them in are not the same who were commanded to take them away. The *Douloi* brought them in, the *diakonoi* took them away, the King has a special order of servants for the taking of deceivers away; his angels do that in the hour of death—they execute his vengeance. He gives us ministers a better office, he bids us be his heralds of mercy. Then the judge said, “*Cast*

him,” fling him like a useless, worthless thing. That wretch has dared pollute my marriage feast, cast him away, as men fling weeds over the garden wall or shake off vipers into the fire. There is none in heaven or earth thought more despicable, more fit to be thrown away as rubbish and offal, than a man who had a Christian name, but had not the essentials of the Christian nature. Cast him away. Where? “*Into outer darkness*” far from the banquet hall where torches flame and lamps are bright; drive him out into the cold, chilly midnight air. He has once seen the light, it will be all the darker now for him when he is driven into the dark. There is no darkness so dark as the darkness of the man who once saw light. Cast him into outer darkness. What will he do there? We are not told what would be done to him, it was not needful; we learn elsewhere as much as could be revealed to us, but we are told *what he did*, for “there shall be weeping,” not the gush of tears which gives relief but the everlasting dropping of scalding tears which create fresh sorrow and enlarge their own source. The outcast shed no tears of regret, but of sullen disappointment, because he could not after all dishonour the king, and had even served to illustrate the royal justice and power, and so had brought glory to the king whom he hated in soul. Then came the “gnashing of teeth,” caused by wrath and envy because he could do no more mischief. No sorrow is equal to that of a malicious spirit, that having attempted a daring deed of atrocious wickedness, has been defeated and has contributed to the triumph of the good and excellent. The misery of hell is not a misery which God arbitrarily creates, it is the necessary result of sin, it is sin itself come to ripeness. Here you see the picture of the man who was insolent enough to come into the church without being a Christian, and now for ever he gnashes with his teeth against that glorious Majesty of heaven which it will never be in his power to injure, but which it will always be in his heart to hate; and this will be his hell—that he hates God, this his darkness—that he cannot see beauty in God, and this the outerness of the darkness—that he cannot enter into God’s will. “Depart ye cursed,” is only love repelling that which is not lovely, it is only justice giving to man what his fallen nature craved after. “Get away from me, ye did not honour me; when ye did come to me it was with your lips only. Go where your hearts were; depart from me, you cursed.” Oh, may God grant that not one here may come under the lash of this terrible parable, but may we be found of the Lord in peace in the day of his appearing. You see, then, how the Lord sifts us. First we are sifted by the preaching of the gospel, and many will not come—there is one heap of chaff: next, by the judgment of God in his church, and others are found wanting—there is another heap of chaff. Ah, when this is done, and the two great sieves are used, shall we be found among the wheat?

Do you say, “the sermon has nothing to do with me, I never made a profession, I shall go home easy enough.” Come hither friend, I must not let you go. There is a vagabond brought before the magistrate accused of theft, he says he is perfectly innocent, but he is convicted and has to suffer for it; after him comes a bragging fellow, who says, “I do not

make any profession of being honest, I rob anybody I can, and I mean to do so, I do not pretend to keep the law." Why, methinks the magistrate would say, "I condemned the one who did at least pretend to something decent, but to you I give double punishment, you are evidently incorrigible, and your case needs no consideration." You who do not say you are Christians, who confess you are not, you avow yourselves the enemies of Christ; get no comfort therefore out of this parable I pray you, but yield yourselves to the Saviour, and believe in him, for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Epistle of Jude.

The attention of all our friends is earnestly directed to the SERIES OF SPECIAL SERVICES AT THE TABERNACLE. In order that London friends may unite with us we publish the meetings week by week, and at the same time our country friends can join with us in spirit:—

Lord's-day, February 26th.—Sermon to the Sabbath School and young people generally. By C.H.S., at 3 p.m.

Monday, February 27th.—Prayer-meeting for females only, at six. Young people's prayer-meeting at the same time. At seven, Elders and Deacons will deliver addresses to the unconverted at the usual prayer-meeting.

Tuesday, February 28th.—Great meeting of butcher's men, invited by Mr. Henry Varley. Addresses in the Tabernacle at 7. (Tickets.) C.H.S. to preside.

Wednesday, March 1st.—Prayer-meetings at the houses of our friends, according to the list, which will be issued. May the prayers of all the households be heard in heaven.

Thursday, March 2nd.—Mothers' prayer-meeting at six. Meeting for persons under concern of soul at half-past eight, after the lecture. Fathers' prayer-meeting at 8:30.

Friday, March 3rd.—Meeting of our young friends above fifteen, and yet unsaved. Tea at six. (Tickets to be had of the Elders.)