

believeth shall have eternal life," every one of you would lay hold on Jesus Christ, and look alone to his cross. But alas! such is the desperate evil of our nature, such the pernicious depravity of our character, that this message is despised, the invitation to the gospel feast is rejected, and there are many of you who are this day enemies of God by wicked works, enemies to the God who preaches Christ to you today, enemies to him who sent his Son to give his life a ransom for many. Strange I say it is that it should be so, yet nevertheless it is the fact, and hence the necessity for the command of the text,—“Compel them to come in.”

Children of God, ye who have believed, I shall have little or nothing to say to you this morning; I am going straight to my business—I am going after those that will not come—those that are in the byways and hedges, and God going with me, it is my duty now to fulfil this command, “Compel them to come in.”

First, I must **find you out**. If you read the verses that precede the text, you will find an amplification of this command: “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind”; and then, afterwards, “Go out into the highways,” bring in the vagrants, the highwaymen, “and into the hedges,” bring in those that have no resting-place for their heads, bring them in also, and “compel them to come in.” Yes, I see you this morning, you that are poor. I am to compel you to come in. You are poor in circumstances, but this is no barrier to the kingdom of heaven, for God hath not exempted from his grace the man that shivers in rags, and who is destitute of bread. In fact, if there be any distinction made, the distinction is on your side, and for your benefit—“Unto you is the word of salvation sent”; “for the poor have the gospel preached unto them.” But especially I must speak to you who are poor, spiritually. You have no faith, you have no virtue, you have no good work, you have no grace, and what is poverty worse still, you have no hope. Ah, my Master has sent you a gracious invitation. Come and welcome to the marriage feast of his love. “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” Come, I must lay hold upon you, though you be defiled with foulest filth, and though you have nought but rags upon your back, though your own righteousness is but filthy rags, yet must I lay hold upon you, and invite you first, and even compel you to come in.

And now I see you again. You are not only poor, but you are maimed. There was a time when you thought you could work out your own salvation without God’s help, when you could perform good works, attend to ceremonies, and get to heaven by yourselves; but now you are maimed, the sword of the law has cut off your hands, and you can work no longer; you have lost all power to obey the law; you feel that when you would do good, evil is present with you. You are maimed; you have given

up, as a forlorn hope, all attempt to save yourself. But you are worse off than that, for if you could not work your way to heaven, yet you could walk your way there along the road by faith; but you are maimed in the feet as well as in the hands; you feel that you cannot believe, that you cannot repent, that you cannot obey the gospel. You feel that you are utterly undone, powerless in every respect to do anything that can be pleasing to God. To you am I sent. Before you am I to lift up the blood-stained banner of the cross, to you am I to preach this gospel, “Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

There is yet another class. You are halt. You are halt-between two opinions. You are sometimes seriously inclined, and at another time worldly gaiety calls you away. What little progress you do make in religion is but a limp. You have a little strength, but that is so little that you make but painful progress. “How long halt ye between two opinions? if God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him.” Consider thy ways; halt no longer, but decide for God and his truth.

And yet I see another class,—the blind. Yes, you that cannot see yourselves, that think yourselves good when you are full of evil, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness; to you am I sent. You, blind souls that cannot see your lost estate, that do not believe that sin is so exceedingly sinful as it is, and who will not be persuaded to think that God is a just and righteous God, to you am I sent. To you too that cannot see the Saviour, that see no beauty in him that you should desire him; who see no excellence in virtue, no happiness in serving God, no delight in being his children; to you am I sent.

Ay, to whom am I not sent if I take my text? For it goes further than this—it not only gives a particular description, so that each individual case may be met, but afterwards it makes a general sweep, and says, “Go into the highways and hedges.” Here we bring in all ranks and conditions of men—the gentleman upon his horse in the highway, and the woman trudging about her business, the thief waylaying the traveller—all these are in the highway, and they are all to be compelled to come in; and there away in the hedges lie some poor souls who are seeking to find some little shelter for their weary heads, to you, also, am I sent.

Now, I pause after having described the character, I pause to look at the herculean labour that lies before me. As well might a little child seek to compel a Samson, as I seek to lead a sinner to the cross of Christ. And yet my Master sends me about the errand. Lo, I see the great mountain before me of human depravity and indifference, but by faith I cry, “Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.” Does my Master say, compel them to come in? Then, though the sinner be like Samson and I a child, I shall lead him with

a thread. If God saith do it, if I attempt it in faith, it shall be done; and if with a groaning, struggling, and weeping heart, I so seek this day to compel sinners to come to Christ, the sweet compulsions of the Holy Spirit shall go with every word, and some indeed shall be compelled to come in.

And now to the work—directly to the work. Unconverted, unreconciled, unregenerate men and women, I am to **compel you to come in**. To you in the highways of sin, the King of heaven sends a gracious invitation—“As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live.” “Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.” Dear friend, it makes my heart rejoice to think that I should have such good news to tell you, and yet I confess my soul is heavy because I see you do not think it good news, but turn away from it, and do not give it due regard.

Permit me to tell you what the King has done for you. He knew your guilt, he foresaw that you would ruin yourself. He knew that his justice would demand your blood, and in order that this difficulty might be escaped, that his justice might have its full due, and that you might yet be saved, Jesus Christ hath died. Will you just for a moment glance at this picture. You see that man there on his knees in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood. You see that miserable sufferer tied to a pillar and lashed with terrible scourges, till the shoulder bones are seen like white islands in the midst of a sea of blood. Again you see this third picture: it is the same man hanging on the cross with hands extended, and with feet nailed fast, dying, groaning, bleeding, who cries, “It is finished.” Now all this hath Jesus done, in order that God might consistently with his justice pardon sin; and the message to you is this—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” That is, trust him, renounce thy works, and thy ways, and set thine heart alone on this man, who gave himself for sinners.

Well brother, I have told you the message, what sayest thou unto it? Do you turn away? You tell me it is nothing to you; you cannot listen to it; that you will hear me by-and-by; but you will go your way this day and attend to your farm and merchandise. Stop brother, I was not told merely to tell you and then go about my business. No; I am told to compel you to come in. But do you spurn it? Do you still refuse it? Then I must change my tone a minute. I will not merely tell you the message, and invite you as I do with all earnestness—I will go further. Sinner, in God’s name, I command you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; not on my own authority, but on the authority of him who said, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” and then annexed this solemn sanction, “He that believeth and is baptized

shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Reject my message, and remember, “He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God.” An ambassador is not to stand below the man with whom he deals, for we stand higher. If the minister chooses to take his proper rank, girded with the omnipotence of God, and anointed with his holy unction, he is to command men, and speak with all authority compelling them to come in.

But do you turn away and say you will not be commanded? Then again will I change my note. My brother, I come to you simple of speech, and I exhort you to flee to Christ. Dost thou know what a loving Christ he is? Let me tell thee from my own soul what I know of him. I, too, once despised him. He knocked at the door of my heart and I refused to open it. He came to me, times without number, morning by morning, and night by night; he checked me in my conscience and spoke to me by his Spirit, and when, at last, the thunders of the law prevailed in my conscience, I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind. Oh I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of him. But what a loving reception did I have when I went to him. I thought he would smite me, but his hand was not clenched in anger but opened wide in mercy. I thought full sure that his eyes would dart lightning-flashes of wrath upon me; but instead, they were full of tears. He fell upon my neck and kissed me; he took off my rags and did clothe me with his righteousness, and caused my soul to sing aloud for joy.

I know not what arguments to use with you. I appeal to your own self-interests. Oh my friend, would it not be better for you to be reconciled to the God of heaven, than to be his enemy? What are you getting by opposing God? Are you the happier for being his enemy? Answer, pleasure-seeker: hast thou found delights in that cup? Answer me, self-righteous man: hast thou found rest for the sole of thy foot in all thy works? Oh thou that goest about to establish thine own righteousness, I charge thee let conscience speak. Hast thou found it to be a happy path? Ah, my friend, “Wherefore dost thou spend thy money for that which is not bread, and thy labour for that which satisfieth not; hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” I exhort you by everything that is sacred and solemn, everything that is important and eternal, flee for your lives, look to the blood of Jesus Christ, that blood which cleanseth from all sin.

Are you still cold and indifferent? Will not the blind man permit me to lead him to the feast? Will not my maimed brother put his hand upon my shoulder and permit me to assist him to the banquet? Will not the poor man allow me to walk side-by-side with him? Must I use some stronger words. Must I use some other compulsion

to compel you to come in? Sinners, this one thing I am resolved upon this morning, if you be not saved ye shall be without excuse. Ye, from the grey-headed down to the tender age of childhood, if ye this day lay not hold on Christ, your blood shall be on your own head.

Come, I am not to be put off by your rebuffs; if my exhortation fails, I must come to something else. My brother, I entreat you, I entreat you stop and consider. Do you know what it is you are rejecting? You are rejecting the only Saviour: "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." My brother, I cannot bear that ye should do this, for I remember what you are forgetting: the day is coming when you will want a Saviour. It is not long ere weary months shall have ended, and your strength begin to decline; your pulse shall fail you, and you and the grim monster—death, must face each other. What will you do then? Death-beds are stony things without the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an awful thing to die anyhow; he that hath the best hope, and the most triumphant faith, finds that death is not a thing to laugh at. It is a terrible thing to pass from the seen to the unseen, from the mortal to the immortal, from time to eternity, and you will find it hard to go through the iron gates of death without the sweet wings of angels to conduct you to the portals of the skies. It will be a hard thing to die without Christ. I cannot help thinking of you. I see you acting the suicide this morning, and I picture myself standing at your bedside and hearing your cries, and knowing that you are dying without hope. I cannot bear that. I think I am standing by your coffin now, and looking into your clay-cold face, and saying, "This man despised Christ and neglected the great salvation."

I entreat you, let this message enter your heart for another reason. I picture myself standing at the bar of God. As the Lord liveth, the day of judgment is coming. You believe that? You are not an infidel; your conscience would not permit you to doubt the Scripture. Perhaps you may have pretended to do so, but you cannot. You feel there must be a day when God shall judge the world in righteousness. I see you standing in the midst of that throng, and the eye of God is fixed on you. It seems to you that he is not looking anywhere else, but only upon you, and he summons you before him; and he reads your sins, and he cries, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell!" Picture yourselves in that position? Do you see the pit as it opens to swallow you up? Do you hear the shrieks of those who have preceded you to that eternal lake of torment? "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? with everlasting burnings?" Oh! think of what is to come after death!

Tell me what it is that keeps you from Christ. I hear one say, "Oh, sir, it is because I feel myself too guilty." That cannot be. "But I am the chief of sinners." Is not that the very reason why you should come to Christ. The worse a man is, the more reason he should go to the

hospital. The more poor you are, the more reason you should accept the charity of another. Now, Christ does not want any merits of yours. He gives freely. The worse you are, the more welcome you are. But let me ask you a question: Do you think you will ever get better by staying away from Christ? If so, you know very little as yet of the way of salvation. No, the longer you stay, the worse you will grow; your hope will grow weaker, your despair will become stronger; the nail with which Satan has fastened you down will be more firmly clenched, and you will be less hopeful than ever. Nothing is gained by delay, but by delay everything may be lost.

But did I hear you whisper that this was not a convenient time? Then when will that convenient time come? Shall it come when you are in hell? Will that time be convenient? Shall it come when you are on your dying bed, and the death throttle is in your throat—shall it come then? Or when the burning sweat is scalding your brow; and then again, when the cold clammy sweat is there, shall those be convenient times? When pains are racking you, and you are on the borders of the tomb? No, sir, this morning is the convenient time.

Remember, I have no authority to ask you to come to Christ tomorrow. The invitation is, "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Come now and let us reason together"; why should you put it off? It may be the last warning you shall ever have. You may never have so earnest a discourse addressed to you. You may go away, and God may say, "He is given unto idols, let him alone." He shall throw the reins upon your neck; and then, mark—your course is sure, but it is sure damnation and swift destruction.

Come, I beseech you, to Calvary's mount. See the cross! Behold the Son of God, he who made the heavens and the earth, dying for your sins. Look unto him. Is there not power in him to save? Look at his face so full of pity. Is there not love in his heart to prove him willing to save?

I thought it my duty to labour with you as though I must do it; now I throw it into my Master's hands. It cannot be his will that we should travail in birth, and yet not bring forth spiritual children. It is with him; he is master of the heart, and the day shall declare it, that some of you, constrained by sovereign grace, shall have become the willing captives of the all-conquering Jesus, and have bowed your hearts to him through the sermon of this morning. □



COME JUST AS YOU ARE

Cast yourself at once, in the simplest faith, upon Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. All of your preparation for eternity is entirely out of yourself, and in the Lord Jesus. Washed in his blood, and clothed upon with his righteousness, you may appear before God divinely, fully, freely, and forever accepted. The salvation of the chief of sinners is all prepared, finished, and complete in Christ (*Eph 1:6; Col 2:10*).

Your eye of faith must be directed entirely out of and from yourself to Jesus. Beware of looking for any preparation to meet God in yourself. It is all in Christ. God does not accept you on the basis of a broken heart, or a clean heart, or a praying heart, or a believing heart. He accepts you only on the ground of the perfect atonement of his blessed Son. Cast yourself, in childlike faith, upon that atonement—"Christ dying for the ungodly" (*Rom 5:6*)—and you are saved!

Justification is a poor, law-condemned, self-condemned, self-destroyed sinner, wrapping himself by faith in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is "unto all, and upon all them that believe" (*Rom 3:22*). He, then, is justified, and prepared to meet God, and he only, who casts from him the garment of his own righteousness, and runs into this blessed "City of Refuge"—the Lord Jesus—and hides himself there from the "avenger of blood" (*Joshua 20*), exclaiming, in the language of triumphant faith: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (*Rom 8:1*).

Look to Jesus, then, for a contrite heart; look to Jesus for a clean heart; look to Jesus for a believing heart; look to Jesus for a loving heart; and Jesus will give you all.

One faith's touch of Christ, and one divine touch from Christ, will save the vilest sinner. Oh, the dimmest, most distant glance of faith, turning its languid eye upon Christ, will heal and save the soul. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (*Isaiah 45:22*). God is prepared to accept you in his blessed Son, and for his sake he will cast all your sins behind his back, and take you to glory when you die (*Isaiah 38:17*)—"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins will I remember no more" (*Heb 8:12*).

Never was Christ known to reject a poor sinner that came to him empty and with "nothing to pay" (*Luke 7:42*). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (*Matt 11:28*). God will glorify his free grace in your salvation, and will therefore save you—**just as you are**—"without money and without price" (*Isaiah 55:1*). The apostle Paul responded immediately to the anxious jailor who asked what he must do to be saved—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (*Acts 16:31*).

Regardless of what you have been, or what you are, plunge into that "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" (*Zech 13:1*), and you shall be clean, "washed whiter than snow" (*Psalms 51:7; Isaiah 1:18*). "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (*1 John 1:7*). □

"Compel Them
To Come In"
Luke 14:23

I feel in such a haste to go out and obey this commandment this morning, by compelling those to come in who are now tarrying in the highways and hedges, that I cannot wait for an introduction, but must at once set about my business. Hear then, O ye that are strangers to the truth as it is in Jesus—hear then the message that I have to bring you.

Ye have fallen, fallen in your father Adam; ye have fallen also in yourselves, by your daily sin and your constant iniquity; you have provoked the anger of the Most High; and as assuredly as you have sinned, so certainly must God punish you if you persevere in your iniquity, for the Lord is a God of justice, and will by no means spare the guilty. But have you not heard, hath it not long been spoken in your ears, that God, in his infinite mercy, has devised a way whereby, without any infringement upon his honour, he can have mercy upon the guilty and undeserving?

To you I speak; and my voice is unto you, O sons of men; Jesus Christ, very God of very God, hath descended from heaven, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Begotten of the Holy Ghost, he was born of the virgin Mary; he lived in this world a life of exemplary holiness, and of the deepest suffering, till at last he gave himself up to die for our sins, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." And now the plan of salvation is simply declared unto you—"Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." For you who have violated all the precepts of God, and have disdained his mercy and dared his vengeance, there is yet mercy proclaimed, for "whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "For this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"; "Whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out, for he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

Now all that God asks of you—and this he gives you—is that you will simply look at his bleeding dying Son, and trust your souls in the hands of him whose name alone can save from death and hell. Is it not a marvelous thing, that the proclamation of this gospel does not receive the unanimous consent of men? One would think that as soon as ever this was preached, "that whosoever