

*sinner.*" That is, the unprincipled, wicked, and profane portion of society. Persons about whose moral character, and standing in society there was but one opinion. Persons whom the proud, self-sufficient, self-complacent Pharisee, would spurn with contempt from his presence; and to eat and drink with whom would render him loathsome even in his own eyes. The publicans and sinners drew near to Christ for to hear him, and he who is the Physician of the sick, the Friend of the friendless, the Saviour of sinners, the Seeker and Finder of the lost, treated them as they had never been treated before. He was glad to see them coming, drawing *near*,—drawing near unto *him*. They could see it in his eye, they could hear it in the gentle loving tone of his voice,—they could feel it both in his heart and their own. They knew, and believed that their being publicans and sinners would not turn him away from them. They came as sinners, and it was as sinners that Jesus received them. He came to save sinners, the chief of sinners, and it is very evident from the preceding chapter that the great teacher had just been delivering a discourse about the fulness and freeness of the gospel under the figure of a *great supper*, to which all, even the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind were invited, and it was *then* that the publicans and sinners drew near to hear him. There was something in his looks, his words, his heart, which drew them to hear him, and they could not but see and feel when they heard him that he loved them and desired their salvation. Dear reader, if *you* have not yet come to Christ, permit me to tell you that he is willing to receive *you*, and anxious to save and bless you. He is now saying, Come unto *me* all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.

The *Pharisees and Scribes* were the second of the two classes of our Lord's hearers on the occasion when he delivered the parable of the lost sheep. And there can be no doubt whatever that what they thought, and felt, and said, led him to utter the parable. They were displeased with Christ, "they murmured, saying, this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." This was the cause of their displeasure, and that displeasure nestled in their bosoms until it manifested itself in hatred and malignity. The cause of their hatred was no cause, and no wonder he said on one occasion "they hated me without a cause." There was truth however in what they said, precious truth. *Christ did "receive sinners."* This is a delightful truth. To receive sinners and eat with them and give them spiritual food to eat, was in harmony with his character, his mission, and the whole of his ministry.