

THE SOWER.

IS IT ENOUGH!

Is it enough that Jesus took my place?
Is it enough, that God then hid His Face
From Him, the substitute of sin, *my sin*?
If not, my soul, how wilt thou pardon win?

Canst find within the treasures of earth,
Something of deeper value, greater worth
To God, than that most precious blood unpriced,
Another Lamb to bear thy guilt than Christ?

Has heaven a fairer, mightier than He,
Whom Angels watched in wonder on the tree?
If He is not enough for thy poor heart,
Then thou, and hope, must aye, for ever part,

And in the dark abyss beyond,
Thy soul must cry :
"None strong enough to save."
Knowing it is a lie.

HAVE YOU A WEDDING GARMENT?

“THE kingdom of heaven” said Jesus, “is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.”

People had been invited to this marriage feast, and when all is ready, according to the customs of those countries, slaves are sent to those who have received invitations to tell them to come. But the bidden, refuse the invitation, they despise the message, and go their several ways; some even insulting and killing the messengers of the king. In his righteous anger the king destroys those murderers and burns their city.

But it is his wish that his son should be honored, and that the wedding feast which has been prepared should be furnished with guests. He therefore sends his slaves with this command: “Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.” The slaves obey the orders of the king, they gather all they find, both bad and good, and the place is filled.

This parable of the Lord's, is a striking illustration of the invitations the gospel addresses to men, and how they have been received. The purpose of God is, that His beloved Son should be honored; the marriage supper is *for Him*. The children of Israel were those bidden as we see in the prophetic scriptures; the promises of blessing had been given to them, and when the Lord was upon the earth they were

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invited to rejoice therein, but refused. After Jesus had gone up to heaven, He sent His servants with new messages of grace to them, pressing them to come to the prepared feast, but as the Acts of the Apostles tells us, they again refused, and they persecuted, and killed, the messengers of the Lord. The anger of God was then brought to the full against them; Jerusalem, their city, was taken and destroyed by the Romans; great numbers of themselves perished; and those who were left were scattered over all the earth; a standing judgment, witnessing to the truth of the scriptures.

The Jews having thus refused the grace of God which brings salvation, God did not however abandon His purpose of honoring His Son, and He sent His servants to the Gentiles, as said the apostle Paul to the Jews who opposed him: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." (Acts xiii. 46). "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." (Acts xxviii. 28). The invitation is sent to the whole world: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." (Titus ii. 11). The servants of the Lord have to bid all they find; none are excluded—whoever you are; wherever you are; whatever you are; *you* are invited; come, for all is ready. Rich or poor, wise or foolish, great or little, old or young, *all* are included.

Reader, you are invited, will you come? Take care

how you receive the message. The Jews despised it, and judgment overtook them. It will be just the same for you if you act as they did. How can you escape if you neglect so great a salvation, read Heb. ii. 3 :—“ And those slaves,” said the Lord in speaking of His 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.” During more than eighteen hundred years the servants have proclaimed the invitation everywhere, and hundreds of thousands have responded to it. The invited have not been wanting ; their number is great. Christianity includes them ; all who profess to be Christians have been bidden. Reader, you bear the name of Christian, you are then one of the invited ; but to be invited is not enough ; to find yourself in the place of the feast, is not enough to enable you to have part in it. The presence of the King ; the honor due His Son ; demands a dress in keeping with the place. Listen to the Lord’s words as to this : “ 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.

Picture to yourself the banqueting hall of a royal palace, adorned with all the magnificence befitting such a place, such a host, and the one for whom the feast was made. A flood of light makes brilliant the paintings, and other works of art, which adorn the walls, and other parts of the room. The tables are

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laid and an exquisite banquet is prepared. The servants have fulfilled their mission and the hall is filled with the invited guests. Suddenly the doors are opened and the king enters to see them—all eyes are fixed upon him, and in the presence of his majestic appearance many a heart beats highly, and profound respect fills all minds. His piercing eye looks down the lines of the guests, and is arrested by a man among them. Why is this one so troubled under the royal attention? why do his eyes drop? whence the pallor of his cheeks? why so ill at ease? has he not been invited? Yes, surely, the bad and the good, all have been invited. What has he then to fear? His life has perhaps been a very bad one? But the bad, the very worst, are included in the invitation. What then is the cause of his embarrassment? The king said to him, "Friend." He was then welcome; the king had nothing against him. But he asked him one question: "How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" To such a simple question he ought to have been able to give a ready answer; he would never have dared to present himself in the festive hall without a suitable dress, if he had not had a good excuse. But no, the Lord adds: "And he was speechless."

Reader, are you a professor? Tell me, do you bear the name of Christian?

"I go regularly to a place of worship," you perhaps reply. But I ask you; Are you really a Christian?

"O, I do not profess to be religious, but I am not an infidel."

Then what are you? You do not wish to be called an infidel, you make no profession of being religious, yet you attend regularly a place of worship, and outwardly assume to be a Christian. "O," you say, "I know very well I am not like what *you* would call a Christian."

Well my friend, let me tell you, I fear, that like thousands of others, you are not what *the word of God* calls a Christian. You are merely a *professor* of Christianity, and, mark it well, all the invited to the marriage supper are professors. If, from time to time, you take the place, nominally, of being a Christian, whatever your state may be, you are a professor. The invitations of grace are proclaimed on all sides; for hundreds of years the servants have been bidding all the world: all those who observe the form which prevails in Christianity have accepted the invitation, and have taken their place in the festal hall. In contrast with paganism, the light shines in Christianity, and the rich banquet of grace is prepared before the eyes of all—Every professor is among the invited. But that will not be enough to enjoy the feast; more than a mere name, and outward form, are necessary. The moment will come when the king will enter to see those who are at the table; and the day also will come when all who are of the Christian profession will have to do with God. The day will come when the worth of your profession will be tested by God Himself; for "the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Ps. i. 6). You have taken your place in the banqueting house among

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the invited guests, but are you worthy to be there? *Have you a wedding garment?* Those who have, have nothing to fear, but those who have not, will be cast out. No one will be admitted to enjoy the happiness of eternal blessedness in the presence of God, or to drink of the river of His delight, if he has not Christ. He is the robe in which we must be clothed—Christ—God's righteousness, must cover us, to enable us to stand before God, and to save us from the awful judgment; "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness."

The man in the parable may have thought that he would escape unnoticed in the crowd; but no, the eye of the king rested at once upon him. And do you suppose you will be able to escape the eyes of the Lord which are as a flame of fire? "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight." (Heb. iv. 13). It will be impossible to escape observation. You have heard the invitation, and you have accepted it, "one thing you lack," but it is the one thing necessary; you have neglected to put on the wedding garment; you have imagined that your wretched garment, soiled with sin, is good enough for the king. When he will say to you: "How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment," what will you say? what excuse can you make? you will be speechless.

In those countries where the scene of the parable is laid, it is said that persons of high rank provide robes for guests whom they invite to a feast. There is therefore not the slightest excuse for not wearing

them, and the necessity is even greater when the guests are taken from the highways.

God has provided that every one invited may have a wedding garment; a robe which corresponds to His holiness, and which proclaims, not the virtue of the one covered, but the King's thoughts as to His Son. Without that you will be cast out.

No one can say that the robe is not for him. "The righteousness of God * * * is unto all, and upon all them that believe." (Rom. iii. 22). The righteousness of God is what you need and that is Christ—it is upon all who believe in Him. If you present yourself before God clothed like Cain, in your own righteousness, you will be rejected like him. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" an impure thing in God's sight. But if you see yourself a lost sinner; helpless, and unworthy to stand before God; and if you believe in the Lord Jesus, and His work of atonement; God declares you righteous, and admits you to all the blessings of salvation now, and to heaven soon. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (II Cor. v. 21). And this is the price at which the robe has been acquired. *Have you put it on?* without it, you will not be able to remain in the banquet hall, even though you have entered.

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

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A DELIVERED SOUL.

PICTURE to yourself a pretty village in the very centre of England: its thatched roofed cottages grouped on the side of a hill; its paths bordered with sweet brier, and honey-suckle; a rippling brook coursing through a little valley, under a canopy of spreading beech and oaks.

I was a visitor in this village at my brother's, who had recently been appointed rector of the parish, and on my first walk out with him I could not but express my admiration of the charming picture.

"To judge by appearances," said my brother, "it is an ideal village, and these thatched roofs appear to cover only happy people, but misery and sorrow are concealed under these, as well as elsewhere. In order to convince you, you have only to enter the first house you reach on your road; this, for instance, on our right—There lives in this house a woman who is the picture of despair; the neighbors look upon her as insane; she believes she is lost; and all my efforts to bring before her the consolation of religion have so far been fruitless."

My brother thereupon opened the gate of the little garden, and left me to enter the house alone, as he went on to pay a visit elsewhere.

I felt that God only could avail for such a case, and I lifted up my heart to Him, praying that He might give me a message from Himself, for this agonised soul.

The poor woman was at work when I entered, but she ceased when I told her I had come to see her; she placed a chair for me, and we sat down face to face. We were in a large room, which had an ancient chimney, and slabs of stone, for a floor.

After having spoken of our sinful state, I showed her how the blood of Jesus covered, and blotted out, our sins; but my explanations produced a look of gloominess; and she replied with a solemn voice; "*There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked.*"

"No," I replied, "no peace, so long as it is sought within; but there is perfect peace in Jesus.—'*He is our peace.*'"

Crying earnestly to God that He would reveal Jesus to her as her Saviour, I continued to speak of the completeness of the salvation He has accomplished; and quoted several passages, such as the following: "*All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way,*" but scripture adds, "*The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all,*" and again; "*He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.*"

The poor woman turned away her head, but I saw the tears roll down her pale face, half concealed by her straw hat.

I spoke to her of the love of Jesus, who came to seek and to save that which was lost; and reminded her of the price paid for our ransom. I felt that the Lord had given me each word.

"Will you not now accept the salvation which the Lord offers you?" I at length asked.

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she replied. "It may be that He will give me peace at the moment of my death. He has His own time."

"Let us see in the word what is His time," I replied as I opened my bible. "I do not ask you to believe my word, but God's. Do you believe that all He has said is true?"

"Yes."

"Very well, God says in II Cor. vi. 2, '*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*' You see the time indicated by God is *now*."

"Yes," said she hesitatingly.

I continued; "It is God who has sent me to you this afternoon, and the message I bring is from Him; will you not believe it?"

The expression on my poor friend's face, showed the terrible struggle going on in her soul. Satan was using every means to retain his victim, while I was lifting up my heart to the Lord that He would accomplish His work of deliverance in her.

We were both so deeply interested in the conversation, that we had not noticed how rapidly the hours had passed, until the shades of evening warned me that it was time to return home; but I felt I could not do so, until this poor soul had found peace. I again implored her to come to Jesus without delay, and to accept the grace He had obtained for her.

After a short silence she said, slowly and seriously; "If you have been sent by God, and your message is from Him, His time has evidently come."

"Then you *now* accept Jesus as your Saviour?"

"Yes," she said, with emotion. We kneeled down

on the stone floor and I asked the Lord not only for sustaining grace in coming to Him, but for an entire confidence in His power to keep her. Her tears flowed freely while I prayed, and I shall never forget the scene.

I returned the following day and found her peaceful, and happy; no longer occupied with her sentiments, but with the One who had died to give her life and peace.

She then told me that the Lord Jesus had drawn her to Himself three years before, but that Satan was unceasing in his efforts to disturb her peace; to turn her thoughts away from Christ; and occupy her with her own state; but Christ at length had broken the chains, and set her free.

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

ALL IS CLEAR NOW.

“I have been much troubled about my sins for the past twelve months,” said an aged woman, “but now all is clear.”

“How has that come about?” she was asked.

“Oh the precious blood of Christ,” she replied, “this precious blood has washed away all my sins! Now I can lie down and sleep in peace, for I know that if it pleased God that I should die during the night, I would awaken in heaven. Before, I could not sleep, so great was my fear and anxiety; but now, all is peace. Oh! what love is that of Jesus, who has come down here, and died for a poor sinner like me, unworthy of grace, and incapable of pleasing God.”

Reader, are you rejoicing in this peaceful assurance in Christ.

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GENTILE MERCY, NOT JEWISH PROMISES.

MATTHEW XV, 21-28

THERE is a practical lesson in Christ's way of mercy toward this woman, as well as a secret in her lowly, uncomplaining assumption of the place that belonged to her, that many a heart, that is seeking for help in Jesus, needs to know.

The soul that knows and owns its wretchedness, and makes no pretension to any claim, yet brings its misery before a God of goodness, is a soul that Jesus can never refuse to comfort. He may be repelled by the claims of a false and pretended righteousness: but He cannot hide Himself from the misery that seeks His aid, and has no plea nor appeal except for mercy's ear. For mercy dwells, as in its proper fountain, in the heart of God; and Jesus is both the expression of that mercy, and the channel through which it flows.

Blessed Lord! He can dismiss from His presence a company of proud Pharisees, who find fault with His ways of grace, with the stern rebuke, "Go ye and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" and can say to a poor outcast Gentile, that pretends to receive nothing from Him but what goodness can give to a dog, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Misery thus owned and felt, and making its appeal to sovereign mercy, reaches at once the eternal spring of goodness.

This woman was of the outcast nations of Canaan, (dwelling in the regions of Tyre and Sidon, proverbial for their wickedness,)—a mere sinner of the Gentiles—an “alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenants of promise.” Her misery had drawn her to Christ for help, and her heart had entire confidence in His power. Still, at her first, and even second appeal, she meets only with a repulse. She said, “Have mercy on me, O Lord thou Son of David.”—“But He answered her not a word.”

The “Son of David” was a title that indeed belonged to Christ, but it was as the Messiah of the Jews; and this woman was not a Jew. A Canaanite had nothing to do with “the Son of David.” She was a Gentile, and she must take the outcast Gentile’s place, relinquishing the ground of Jewish promises, to which she had no claim. The disciples would have got rid of her at any rate—for her misery could not be repulsed—but man’s thoughts are not to set aside the order, and the covenants of God. Therefore Jesus answered them, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This but brings the woman nearer to Christ, with the more touching expression of her sorrow, “Lord help me!” But no! she must go lower yet. She was an outcast Gentile; Israel’s covenanted mercies did not reach her case; and she must hear the word from Christ, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to the dogs.”

This was a terrible word to fall on her ear. But

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it was true. And until our hearts have learned to submit to this, we have not reached the place to which sin has brought us in the presence of God; nor are we on that ground of rest, (even if believers), that nothing can shake or disturb. It is indeed a terrible thing to feel one's ruin in the presence of God; and to know that His mercy is our only resource, and, at the same moment, to be obliged to own, that we have not the least claim to the exercise of that mercy. But this is the truth of our case; and the Lord's dealing with this woman illustrates it in the plainest way.

She had no claim to the promises, and therefore could not plead them. She was not a child, and therefore could not claim the children's portion. She was, in truth, a Gentile dog—and she could only have a dog's portion. In the presence of God, even when suing for mercy, we must indeed take the place that belongs to us. This poor woman does so. She does not refuse the place that belongs to her, however low and degraded it may be. But, oh, there is a reality in her dealing with the Lord that nothing can set aside. She meets the reply of Christ, by taking the dog's place; and answers, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

She owns God's sovereign right to choose a people, if He pleases. She acknowledges that she is not one of them, and that she has no right to the children's portion. But, at the same time, she casts herself on that sovereign goodness, to which she can make no claim, and is content with what, in its sovereign exercise, it can bestow on a dog.

The apparent harshness of Christ in refusing to

meet her appeal on ground that did not belong to her, only drew her soul to where mercy could flow without a bar. When she lets go the title of "Son of David," which a Gentile could not use; when she owns that she has no title to the children's bread when she asks only for the mercy that the God of goodness can show to a dog, she finds that her apprehensions of His goodness are more than confirmed by Christ, and that she had reached a fountain that rises above every thought and desire of her heart.

EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM.

In unexpectedness He will come, as a thief, but as to the fact itself, it will be the most universal sight that the world has ever experienced. At His first coming it was, Where is He? but the second time, it will be the very reverse of this. Terror, remorse, despair, will strive for mastery in every breast. To think that this One, so terrible to look upon as a Judge, was the One so beseechingly preached, so shortly before, as ready, willing, anxious to save to the uttermost, all coming to God by Him. And now, hope is forever fled, and the flood-gates of the previous ages of pent-up wrath, let loose upon a guilty and indifferent world. What had they gained by sin? Nothing. What had they lost in not receiving Him as Saviour? Everything. Alas, that men should be so senseless! Alas, that Satan should have such power! Now, it is, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, should have eternal life. It is the Father's will that it should be so. It is that for which He went to the enormous cost of giving His Son. It is, that because He wills that souls see Him now, and have that eternal life, that He has put off for eighteen hundred years giving the kingdom to His Son.