

PRACTICAL DISCOURSES.

GOSPEL-COMPULSION.*

A Sermon preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, at
Ettrick.

Luke xiv. 23.

Compel them to come in.

AND are they not happy that are in? Is your rock as their rock, O sinners, yourselves being judges? And why will not ye come in too? Christ's house is not yet filled. Many have come in, but "yet there is room" for more, ver. 22. And we are sent to "compel you to come in." So we have it in charge in our text.

The scope of this parable (which, upon the matter, is the same with that of the marriage-feast, Matt. xxii.) is to shew the rejection of the Jews for their rejecting of Christ, and the calling of the Gentiles into their room. The supper to which they are bidden here, is Jesus Christ, with all his saving benefits: he is the maker, and the matter of this supper also. In the morning of time, in the patriarchal ages, men were invited to this feast; for even then there were not wanting preachers of righteousness, 2 Peter ii. 5. In the mid-day, under the law, they were invited to it, by prophets, priests, and Levites. And here in the evening, in the last times, the times of the gospel, they are called to it as a supper; the dispensation of the gospel being the last dispensation of grace to the world. The Jews were they that got the first offer, but they would not come; they made their excuses, as ye may read vers. 17, 18, 19,

* This Sermon, originally intended to have been inserted in the author's book, entitled, "Human Nature in its Fourfold State," &c. at the close of the discourses on "the state of grace, or begun recovery," to which it plainly refers, and prepared for the press with that view, is here inserted, as a very proper introduction to the many excellent discourses in this volume.

20. of this chapter. The Gentiles get the next offer ; the servant is sent out to the streets and lanes : the ministers of Christ preach the gospel to the poor Gentiles, and they receive it. But all come not in at once : therefore the servant is sent out into " the highways and hedges," where the most miserable sort of people are to be found ; and even these must be compelled to come in. Possibly, this double sending forth of the servant, may point at the Lord's way in the dispensation of the gospel to the Gentile world : the gospel being first preached to those of them who had renounced the idolatry of their country, and worshiped the true God ; and sometimes assembled with the Jews in their synagogues to learn of them the knowledge of God, though they did not embrace the ceremonial part of their religion : these might well be represented by the " poor, maimed, and blind," sitting in the streets and lanes of the city. But afterwards it was carried to the most dark corners of the earth, where there was no respect either to the Jewish or Christian religion, but all were sunk together in most gross ignorance and idolatry ; which might fitly be represented by " the highways and hedges." See Acts x. ; and xiii. 42, 46, 49.

In the text we have three things. (1.) The great design ministers should have before their eyes in preaching the gospel ; and that is, to bring sinners *in* to Christ. It must not be to draw them to a party, but to draw them to Christ. It is not to make them only change their *work*, they continuing still *without*, by preaching mere morality to them ; but it is to make them change their *master* too, to get them into Christ by faith. (2.) Consider whom they are to deal with in order to bring them in ; even those that are sitting in the highways and hedges, like beggars in rags and sores, the most unworthy and vile sinners. (3.) The method they must use to get them in ; " Compel them" to come in, not by using bodily violence towards them. Christ put the sword of the Spirit in the hands of his ministers, but not the temporal sword. Dragooning, torturing, murdering, may be fit means to bring in men to Antichrist, but not to bring them in to Christ. The compulsion in the text is a moral compulsion, such as those use who invite men to feasts, who are not wont to cudgel them in, but seriously and earnestly to deal with them until they consent. So should ministers compel sinners to come in to Christ, dealing with them seriously and affectionately, so as sinners may see they are in good earnest upon their Master's errand. We must give them the charming invitations and offers of the gospel upon the one hand, and lay before them the " terror of the Lord," on the other hand, that if men will go to hell, they may go with a witness. Withal, here is intimated that efficacy of the

Spirit, which goes along with the word, to the conversion of the elect; which does not force, but sweetly *necessitates* them to come in.

DOCTRINE. It is the great work of ministers to compel sinners, in a gospel-way, to come in to Christ.

The best way that I can handle this text, is to aim at that which is given in charge in it. And in order to this, consider with me the import of it.

I. Sinners naturally are *out*. Were it not so, they needed not be compelled to come in. Hear all ye this day that are out of Christ, what ye are out of, and where ye are.

First, Sinners, do ye know what ye are out of? (1.) All ye that are out of Christ, are out of God's family, Eph. ii. 18, 19, God's household is the household of faith, ye are none of it. His house may be an empty house for you. Adam ran out of the house, and all his posterity with him; and ye are still there, where Adam left you. And is not that a sad case, to be out of God's family? Though ye are in our mother's house, ye cannot call him Father, seeing ye are not in Christ his Son: ye can have no claim to the portion and inheritance of the children, Gal. iv. 30. (2.) Ye are out of God's covenant of peace, and so without hope of salvation, while in that state, Eph. ii. 12. Ye read of a glorious chariot, Cant. iii. 9, 10. It is the covenant of grace, the covenant of peace, as it is held forth in the everlasting gospel; for that is "the word of truth, meekness, and righteousness," upon which Christ rides and prospereth. The first chariot, wherein Adam and his children should have been carried to heaven, was the covenant of works: Adam had the guiding of it; but it did not drive far till it was broken to pieces. Now, there is a new one made in which Christ is carrying all his people to glory; but ye are out of it. King Solomon, the Mediator Christ, made it; it could not be made without him. He made it for himself, to manifest his own glory, and the exceeding riches of his grace by it; and "for the daughters of Jerusalem," to carry his bride home to his Father's house, in it. It was made of the durable "wood of Lebanon;" for he will have it to be an everlasting covenant, that shall never be broken. It has "pillars of silver," those excellent promises that are peculiar to the covenant of grace, as the promises of pardon, perseverance, &c., for it is "established upon better promises." And because there is no small weight in this chariot when a sinner is in it, he hath made the "bottom thereof of gold," solid and strong, so that none that are in it (though heavier than mountains of brass) shall fall through

it: for "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19; they are secured by God's eternal decree of election. No storms of wrath can fall upon them that are in it; for it hath a covering of the purple blood of Jesus Christ. "The midst thereof, the inner part" of it, "is paved with love:" love lines the chariot; it is above them, it is on every hand of them; yea it is underneath them, so that if they do fall in it, they shall not get such a grievous fall, but they will be able to rise again. Happy they that are in it! But, alas! sinners, ye are out of it. Ye are lying there where the first chariot laid you when it broke. (3.) Ye are out of God's favour, being out of Christ. Now, that is dreadful, for our God is a consuming fire. And there is no shelter from the wrath of God, but under the covert of the blood of the Mediator, Eph. ii. 13. The destroying angel is coming through, and there is no blood sprinkled on your door-posts. God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; if ye do not *come in*, and meet him there, what can ye expect but that he will meet you *without*, as a bear bereaved of her whelps, rend the caul of your heart, and devour you like a lion? Hos. xiii. 8. What do your duties avail, while ye are out of Christ? can they procure you God's favour? Your tears will never come into his bottle, nor will your prayers reach his ears, John xiv. 6.

Secondly, Know ye, sinners, where ye are? I will tell you where ye are. (1.) Ye are on the devil's pasture, the mountains of vanity, about the lions' dens, and the mountains of leopards, where Satan feeds his herd. Ye are out of God's house, wandering abroad for bread, begging at the world's door, saying, Where is it? Ye know not Christ, the bread of life; and therefore the dung of worldly profits and pleasures is so valuable in your eyes. But tell me, sinner, are you ever satisfied? You would "fain fill your belly with the husks" of the world; but do they fill you indeed? is not the substance squeezed out of these things, so as ye find them but empty husks? In all your traversing of the mountains of vanity, came ye ever to the place of which you could say, (and stand by it), This is my rest, and here I will stay? no nor never shall, till ye come to Christ, Is. lv. 2. (2.) Ye are in hell upon earth. To be in hell, is to be without, Rev. xxii. 15. and ye are not come in, ye are condemned already John iii. 18. bound in the prison, Is. lxi. 1. What is the difference betwixt you, and them that are in hell? Ye are both prisoners; only ye are in the outer prison, they are in the inner prison. Ye are both away from Christ; only ye *will* depart from him, they *must* depart from him. The fire of God's wrath is set on in the consciences of both; only it is not as yet blown up and made to flame in you, by the breath

of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone to kindle it, as it is in them; but ye know not how soon it may be so. But there is yet another difference; they are prisoners past hope, ye are prisoners of hope. Therefore we proceed to another point.

II. It is the great errand of the friends of the Bridegroom to bring them in that are out. Sirs, ye that are out, ye are where ye should not be, ye are on forbidden ground. We would have you in; we would have you come in to Christ, to unite with him, by believing in him, accepting of him in all his offices.

First, We declare unto you, that our Lord is invested with the sole authority and commission to be the great Prophet, the Preacher and Teacher of the way to Immanuel's land, Acts iii. 22. 23. He has set up his school amongst us, but he hath few disciples; and we are come to compel you to come in, that his house may be filled. Satan has many disciples; carnal wisdom has many scholars. Alas for it! O leave them. Our Lord alone is he that is given of the Father to be the great Leader to the heavenly Canaan, Is. lv. 4. None ever came, or shall come there, but his followers; come in then, giving up yourselves to him to be guided by him. Ye would all be happy, ye would all be at heaven at last: but ye are wandering in a wilderness, where there is no way; and ye will surely lose yourselves, if ye take not him for your leader. The way to glory is a difficult way, and ye are not acquainted with it; nay ye are blind travellers, ready every moment to fall over some precipice. O! will ye take a guide? Ye are now standing (as it were) in a place where two ways meet, uncertain which of them to take. Your own wisdom, which is folly, points out a fair broad way, saying, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither," Prov. ix. 16. but turn not in thither, for "the dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of hell," ver. 18. The Wisdom of the Father, our Lord Christ, points out to you a narrow way, but it leadeth to life; and he is this day saying to you, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither," ver. 4. Come in then, renounce your own wisdom, give up yourselves to him, to be led and guided by him. "Hear, and your souls shall live."

Secondly, Sinners, do not ye know that ye are guilty, and that ye can have no access to an unatoned God? There was a breach made betwixt God and man by sin. Justice demands a sacrifice; an atonement must be made. The sinner himself is unclean, he cannot be the priest; and he is not able to provide a sacrifice, for the cattle on a thousand hills are not sufficient for a burnt-offering. Wherefore Jesus Christ became our Priest; his human nature was the sacrifice; his divine nature the altar that sanctified the gift; the wrath of God was the fire that burned the sacrifice: the blood was carried in to

the most holy place, when Christ ascended into heaven, and sat down at the Father's right hand, to intercede for sinners, upon the ground of his satisfaction. Now, here is the atonement; and we would have you to fall in with this device of salvation by a crucified Christ, renouncing your own righteousness, that you may mount to heaven by the ladder of Christ's mediation. In the earthly paradise, God set up a ladder by which all mankind might get up to the heavenly paradise. It was the covenant of works; a ladder able to bear the weight of all the world at once; but so contrived, that if but the least pin in it were loosed, all would break together. All mankind mounted it, even the first Adam, and all his children in his loins: but he having loosed one pin thereof, in a moment the ladder broke, and he and all his fell down into a gulph of misery, and an horrible pit, where they might see heaven afar off, but no way to get to it more. This dreadful break rejoiced the devils: it astonished the angels; they saw that they could not mend it, nor make another, and they were wiser than to attempt it. The Son of God saw there was none amongst all the creatures to help, and therefore his own arm brought salvation. Another ladder is made, Jesus Christ God-man, the Mediator betwixt God and men, the way to the Father, Gen. xxviii. 12. The foot thereof is set on the earth, for he is man; the ladder was set so low as sinners might reach it; it was set very low, even in "the lower parts of the earth," (Eph. iv. 9), the region of death. The top of it reached to heaven, for he is God; the ladder is so high, that it can set the sinner up to heaven. It can neither loose nor break with the utmost weight upon it; for it is knit together with blood of infinite value, shed to the utmost of what justice demanded, Heb. ix. 14. Come, sinners, lay all your weight on it, and fear not. The first ladder could bear nothing but men's persons; it could not bear one sinner with a burden of guilt on his back, but it would break under him: but this will bear you, and your burden of guilt too, though it would be heavier than the sand of the sea. Ah! there are but few upon this ladder, we would compel you to come on. Have ye a mind to lie still in the gulph? have ye taken your last sight of heaven? have ye bid an eternal farewell to glory? or have ye not done it? then why will ye not be compelled to come on? O come before the ladder be drawn up. I know what ye are thinking in effect, ye that will not be compelled to come on; ye are thinking, like "a thief and a robber," to "climb up some other way." I know what ye are doing; ye are doing one of two: ye are either mending the old ladder, and making the best ye can of the broken pieces, by your morality and legal walk; or ye are making a new one of your own, a ladder of uncovenanted

mercy, trusting to the mercy of God, without uniting with the Mediator. But set ye the feet of them as low as ye will, God's justice will never suffer the tops of them to reach heaven. Lay your weight on them then, if ye will do no otherwise; venture your souls on them, venture eternity on them, and climb up: but know assuredly, though ye should get up so high by them as ye could knock at heaven's door, and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us," there they shall fail you, there they shall break, and tumble you down into the lowest hell, John xiv. 6.

Thirdly, Christ has got a kingdom from his Father, Psal. ii. 6, 7, 8; but he has few real subjects. He has set up his standard here this day, and we are come to compel you to come in, and submit to him as your Lord and King. Ye are under strange lords, and have long refused allegiance to your true Lord. O renounce all your idols now, and give yourselves away to him, to be from henceforth his only, his wholly, his for ever. Come in now, and "kiss the Son," Psal. ii. 12. Bow the knee to him; put the crown on his head, Cant. iii. 11. Open the everlasting doors of your hearts, that the King of glory may come in, Psal. xxiv. 7. If any poor soul be saying within itself, Alas! the armies of hell within my breast are not so easily dispossessed; it is true indeed; but yet I hope you are not so closely blocked up, but that intelligence may be got betwixt Christ and you; ye hear his offer to be your King, will ye give your consent to it? I will ask you but two questions to clear this matter. (1.) If you can do no more, yet will you give him your good-will of the kingdom? Are you willing to part with your lusts, though you be not able to put them away? Though you cannot shake the yoke of bondage off your own neck, will you give Christ your good-will, to take it off, and lay his own upon you? As a King "he will subdue our iniquities," Micah vii. 19. (2.) Can your heart consent to the absoluteness of his government? He must be an absolute monarch, his will in all things must be thy law. And why should he not be so? for he can do no wrong, Psal. xlv. 6, 7. Will you consent that he model the kingdom in thy heart as he will? Shall he set up and cast down there as he pleaseth? have you no secret reserves, no lust that is but "a little one," and must be spared; no prince of the blood of hell, that he must "deal gently with for your sake?" If it be so, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?" Thy consent to him as he offereth himself, is thy coming in.

III. Sinners may come in. Know then that ye have liberty from the Master of the house to come in. Were it not so, he would not send out his servants to compel you to come in. Nay, sirs, he

could keep his doors bolted against you, if it were not his will ye should come in: and if ye would be so bold as to come and knock at the door, or offer violence to it, he could speak a word that would make you fall backward. Our Lord Jesus Christ gives fair liberty to all of you, even the worst of you, to come. Ye that are bearing the devil's mark in your foreheads; ye openly profane persons, that sit as it were in the devil's highways; ye that are bearing his mark in your right hand, which ye can hide when ye please, ye vilest hypocrites, who are hid about the devil's hedges; ye are all welcome for Christ's part, he will not cast the door on your face. Surely there can be no less imported in his charge to compel you to come in. And therefore I would have you step forward. Consider, (1.) Is it nothing to you that ye have leave to come in? It was not so always. If before Christ was revealed, the sinner had offered to have come in, he would have met with the flaming sword of justice, that would have driven him back to his dungeon of misery and darkness. If Christ had not been ground betwixt the upper and nether millstones of the Father's wrath, he could not have been bread to sinners, though they had been hungering after him. (2.) The fallen angels have not leave to come in, and never had since they went out, Jude ver. 6. If it were possible they could believe in Christ, and be content to come in to him, they would get the door cast in their face; for they never got leave to come in. The door was barred on them, and the bar was never drawn, nor ever will, Heb. ii. 16. And God was no more debtor to us than to them. (3.) Be your case what it will, this is sufficient to determine you to come in. If ye remain without, ye are ruined, and all doors of hope are closed on you, except this, Acts iv. 12. The door is open, ye are not forbidden to come in, ye perish if ye come not in; could we say no more, but it may be ye may get in, this might determine you to give it a fair trial, if ye would but act rationally. *Lastly*, This leave to come in will not last always with you. "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door," there will be no more leave to come in, Luke xiii. 25. They that are in hell this day, cannot get in though they would never so gladly; there is no passing of the gulph fixed betwixt Christ and them, Luke xvi. 26. The first Adam closed the door upon us, but there was a second Adam to open it; if the second Adam close the door on us, there is not a third to open it, 2 Cor. iv. 3. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The apostle here has respect to what he had said of the vail on Moses' face, chap. iii. 13. the vail spread over the Old Testament, ver. 14; but the gospel removes this vail, vers. 16, 17, 18. "But,"

says he, "if our gospel also be veiled, it is veiled to them that are lost;" there is not another dispensation of grace to be expected to take off that veil. It is God's last grace to the world, Heb. i. 1, 2. The Lord has been making a feast for the world these five thousand years, and now the last service is on the table. The last ship for Immanuel's land is now making ready to sail; therefore ye must put to sea, now or never, Heb. x. 26, 27.

IV. Sinners are desired to come in. They not only have leave to come in, but they are desired by the Master of the house to come in. Arise then, ye worst of sinners, the "Master calleth you." Ye are called, not to a funeral, but a feast; not to a prison, but to the guest-chamber, where he may entertain you with all the delicacies of heaven. If ye were not desired, why would he send his servants to compel you to come in? and will ye refuse when ye are desired? Consider, I pray you, (1.) It ill becomes you, vile worms, to refuse his call. I am sure he might be for ever happy in himself, though you and I both were where, in strict justice, we should be, in the bottomless pit. He needs none of us. What are we that he should be pleased to trouble himself about us, whether we sink or swim! The angels adore him, his Father honours him, and vile wretches, whom he desires to come in, have the face to refuse him whom the Father heareth always. (2.) There are many as good as you, whom he never desired to come in. He does not call you because he has none other to call, who might fill his house. He might remove this gospel from you, and send it into the dark places of the earth, and compel the pagans to come in. Should he do it, it is very likely his offers would be better entertained amongst them than amongst us. Some divide the world into thirty parts, and find that nineteen of these are possessed by pagans, six of them by Jews, Turks, and Saracens, and only five by Christians; and of these five parts Christian, many are Antichristian, lying yet under the darkness of Popery. And has the Lord chosen us out from among so many, to give us the invitation to come in, and shall we refuse? *Lastly*, How will ye look him in the face, when ye appear before his tribunal, if ye will not come in now at his desire? How will ye look back on rejected love? What will ye do when he comes in wrath to you, that will not come to him now, upon his call?

OBJECTION. But some will say, Is it possible that he calls me, even vile and wretched me? ANSWER. We have general invitations clogged with no conditions, free offers made to all that will come, Is. lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17. And the Lord expressly shews, that no vileness nor unworthiness shall stop any that will come, Is. i. 18. Jer. iii. 1. and what would ye have more? We are sent this day,

in our Master's name, to compel you all to come in, be your case what it will. And if that would persuade you, we should come to you, one by one, and tell you, that it is you, and you, and you, that Christ calls to come in. But if ye believe our doctrine from the word, concerning the misery of your natural state, without hearing your name and surname in particular, why would ye require more in the doctrine concerning the remedy?

V. Sinners must come in. Compel them to come in. Sirs, ye not only may come, but ye must come, even the worst of you. Ye are not only desired to come in, but ye must not abide without. Consider,

First, "This is his commandment, that ye believe," 1 John iii. 23. Ye are peremptorily commanded to come in. God is peremptory with you, and so must we be peremptory with you too. Therefore I tell you, ye must come; and I charge you in his name to come in, and not disobey his peremptory command. Lay your hands to your hearts then, and see what ye will do; whether ye will still abide without, and obey the devil, and your doubts, fears, and jealousies of Christ, or come in upon God's command. Have ye any regard to the authority of God? have ye any respect at all to his command? then give a peremptory answer, within your own breasts, just now, whether ye will come in or not. Are ye peremptory, that ye will not come, like those sullen desperate sinners, Jer. ii. 25, "No, I have loved strangers, and after them will I go?" then what shall we say or do for you? Lord, compel them to come in! Oh! will ye harden yourselves against the Lord, will ye stretch out your hand against God, and strengthen yourselves against the Almighty? For Christ's sake, for your soul's sake, recal that word.

Secondly, But if ye dare not be peremptory that ye will not come, then be peremptory ye will come; for your coming is so commanded, that it will admit of no excuse. Those that were first bidden to this supper, they would not come, but they sent their excuses: but were their excuses sustained? no; God would not take them off their hand, but passeth a peremptory sentence against them, ver. 24. "None of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper." We dare admit no excuses in this matter, bring them from whence ye will, whether from the heaven above you, the hell within you, or the world about you; whether from God's greatness, your own vileness, or world's incumbrances. Whatever your case be, ye are commanded of God to come; and his commands are not to be disputed, but obeyed. Wherefore, if ye will not be peremptory that ye will come, we must report to our Lord that ye will not come.

Thirdly, This duty is so peremptorily commanded, that ye must come, and come presently; it admits of no delay. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Now is the accepted time." We dare not allow you a day, nay nor an hour, to think on it, whether ye will come or not; lest the next day, or the next hour, ye be cast into hell, or a hell be cast into you, for refusing the offer made to you this moment, which is gone before I can name it. Wherefore delay no longer; but this moment open the everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in.

Fourthly, This is the duty God has commanded you: John vi. 29. "This is *the* work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Ye can do the Lord no greater pleasure than to come in. Would ye exalt him this day? then come on his call, Hos. xi. 7: would ye put the crown on Christ's head? would ye make it a "day of the gladness of his heart"? then come in, Cant. iii. 11. It is a great ease for full breasts to be sucked: the breasts of mercy and love are full; come, starving sinner, do him the pleasure to suck the breasts of his consolations. This is the great comprehensive duty: If ye do this, ye do all; if ye do not this, ye do nothing. What mean ye to be nibbling at the works of God, neglecting this, which is *the* work. Ye are keeping your windows closed in the daylight, and setting up a candle here and there, within your house; yet there are terrible dark corners within the house still; open your windows, I beseech you, and let in the sun, "the sun of righteousness," and that will be instead of all, and better than all. Would ye, all at once, be wise, righteous, and holy? then come in to Christ, 1 Cor. i. 30. Ye that can do nothing, come to Christ, and so ye shall do all, Philip. iv. 13. Would ye honour God? would ye honour his law? then come to Christ. But if ye come not to Christ, do what ye will, ye do nothing. Should ye henceforth keep all the ten commandments, but neglect this, all you do would get a black note of condemnation from heaven written on it. Remember, I pray you, that "he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father," John v. 23. All your other duties are but cyphers without this; and multiply them as ye will, the sum in all will be but nought, if this duty do not stand upon their head.

Lastly, It is a duty commanded, with certification of God's eternal displeasure and wrath against those that will not come: Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Psal. ii. 12. "Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." And therefore I, as an ambassador for Christ, do, in his name, command and charge you, and every one of you, to come in, under the pain of God's displeasure, under the pain of vengeance, even the Mediator's

vengeance; certifying, that if ye will not come, our Lord Jesus Christ will come out of heaven against you, and ye shall be "slain before him," Luke xix. 27. To be slain, and die before Christ, who died to save sinners, is a thousand deaths in one; it is a hell upon a hell. But those "that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, even that Lord whose gospel they have not obeyed, 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. Ah! would he be pleased but to confine his presence to heaven, and only allow those that now despise and slight him the favour of being punished from the absence of the Lord; ah! would he but make their destruction come to them at some distance, would he dart the arrows of his wrath into them from afar: nay, but he will have a throne of justice in hell, that they may be punished "from the presence of the Lord," who while in the world fled from his presence on a throne of grace in the gospel. O consider in time what ye do: no fire will burn so violently as that which breaks forth from the altar; no flame of wrath will pierce into a damned soul, like that which is blown up by the breath of a slighted Mediator.

VI. and *Lastly*, Sinners shall come in. Compel them to come in. Leaving secret things to the Lord, I must tell you, sinners, Christ will not want as many as will fill his house. And struggle as long as ye will, in ye shall come. His house shall be filled. The Mediator has bought the furniture of his house too dear to want any of it, and to leave so much empty room in it. I hope there are some here that are the purchase of blood, which men and devils shall not get kept back from Christ. His Father has engaged by covenant, that his house shall be filled, Psal. xxii. 30. "They shall come." See Is. liii. 10, 11. Nay, is not Christ's hand at the hearts of some just now? Do not some of you find a moving of the iron gate of your hearts, towards an opening of it to Christ? Have you not felt something within working to compel you to come in? Are not some almost in already? Thrust forward; there is no safety till ye be not only almost, but altogether Christians.

Come in to Christ then, ye old people, that are bowing down to meet the grave. Ye have delayed long, delay no more. Though it is very rare, yet it sometimes falls out, that a man is born when he is old, Joel ii. 28. Come in, ye of middle age. Are ye out of Christ in your best estate? Surely then your best state is a bad state, a miserable state. Ye are busy providing for your families, but what are ye doing for your souls? Ye are laying up for old age, which, it may be, you will never see: what are ye laying up for eternity? Come in, ye young people; ye are too old to be out

of Christ. Do not think religion is only for the hoary head, the wrinkled brows, and hollow eyes; there are more with green heads than with gray hairs in the grave. Therefore come in, and delay not. The older ye grow putting off the work of religion, your hearts will grow the harder to work upon. Come in, ye profane wretches, that are far from righteousness: come, ye hypocritical professors, that are not far from the kingdom of God: come, ye trembling souls, that are hard at it, and yet dare not come in. O why will ye not come in? I think it must be either because ye will not, or because ye dare not. I fear there are some amongst us that will not come in; they have no mind to quit their lusts, they must follow their old courses, cost what it will; they see no beauty in Christ for which he is to be desired. I shall say little more to such. If ye be resolute for sin, hell, and death, and that no Christ, no heaven, no hell, shall keep you back from the broad way; who can stop you? But be it known unto you, and be it recorded in the black book of your consciences, which shall be opened at the day of judgment, that salvation was in your offer this day, that we endeavoured to compel you to come into Christ, but ye would not; and that therefore your blood shall be on your own heads.

As to you that dare not come in, why dare ye not, after all ye have heard? are ye afraid to come in on Christ's call? dare ye not embrace his invitation? dare ye not obey the great command of God?

OBJECTION. But my sins are innumerable, and most heinous; can there be any room for me? dare such a vile and unworthy wretch as I come in? **ANSWER.** If your sins were each of them as big as a mountain, were they as numerous as the sand of the sea; yet the blood of Christ, being the blood of the Son of God, is able to purge them away, 1 John i. 7. Lay over all your guilt and unworthiness on him who is altogether lovely: sooner shall the rocks sink under the weight of a bird lighting down upon them, than that blood shall fail you. Remember none are compelled to come in, none are called, but the vile and unworthy, Matth. ix. 13. Should your disease keep you from the physician? dare ye not come to the fountain to wash, because ye are unclean? for whom is the fountain opened, but for unclean sinners? The gospel-supper, though a costly one indeed, was provided for none but those that were unworthy of a drop of water, and far more, unworthy of Christ's blood. Be assured, beloved, the question betwixt Christ and you is not, Whether or not Christ will stoop so low as to wash such a foul soul in his own blood? that is a question determined already, Is. i. 18. Zech. xiii. 1. But the question that remains to be decided, is,

Whether or not, after Christ has stooped so low as to be willing to do that, the vile unworthy creature will give him the affront of stooping in vain? What say ye to that question? Ye have affronted the law of God; will ye affront the Son of God too, refusing his offer? If vile-ness and unworthiness could have kept sinners out from Christ, never one of Adam's sons had come in. Did not Christ find all the fair ones that are now in glory, lying in their blood? are there any now walking in white, but those who were washed in the blood of the Lamb? turn over the Bible, look into the history of ages that are past, see if ye can find any one that died at his door, who could not be admitted because he was so vile, wretched, and unworthy.

OBJECTION. But there was never a case like mine. **ANSWER.** There have been very bad cases in Christ's hand, which he has cured; and never did the cure of any case put in his hand misgive. What think ye of Mary Magdalene's case, out of whom he cast seven devils? Mark xvi. 9. Was not Paul's case, who was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and yet found mercy, a case that may be compared with your's? 1 Tim. i. 13. Sure I am, the workings of sovereign grace upon him were designed to encourage the worst of sinners to come in, ver. 16. Manasseh, though he had the benefit of a religious education by his godly father, was an horrid idolater, a consulter with the devil, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. a bloody murderer, 2 Kings xxi. 16; yet he came in, and was received graciously, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12. 13. And what do ye think of the case of Adam, who at once murdered all his children, ruined the souls of all mankind, and sinned against greater light than ever ye could do? But let us yield it to you this once, that never one's case was like yours; and let us add to it, and never shall one be like it hereafter, it is so very bad: then I think ye have, as the penitent thief on the cross had, an occasion of glorifying our great Redeemer peculiar to yourself, wherein none of the vessels of glory have shared, or shall share with you. Come in then, thou whose case is a marrowless case, whose case has no parallel; you have the advantage of an occasion to honour Christ with the cure of a case so desperate, that the like of it was never in his hands before. "Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old," Is. xliii. 18; come in to Christ with your new case, "and, behold," says our Lord, "I will do a new thing," ver. 19. His blood has not yet gone so far as it can go. Grudge him not a new jewel in his crown of grace, that will shine brighter than any yet put into it. Come in then, and take the place appointed for the chief of sinners, deepest in the debt of free grace, if it be yet empty. I assure you, they that have come in already think it is not, but

that they themselves have filled it up. If it be indeed as thou sayest, then they are mistaken; come you in, and you shall get it.

OBJECTION. But, alas! I cannot believe, I cannot come in to Christ. ANSWER. To clear your way in this matter; see that ye set yourselves to come in to Christ in a promise. Christ is held forth to sinners in the promises of the gospel, Is. lv. 1. John vi. 37. Rev. iii. 20. and chap. xxii. 17. If ye would come to his seat, come to the promises, he is in the still small voice; ye will find the babe wrapped up in these swaddling-clothes. They that overlook the promise, and try to believe and come in to Christ, go the wrong way to work: that is like a woman's consenting to marry a man, of whose consent to take her she has no declaration. But the gospel-promise is the contract sent down from heaven, signed already with the Bridegroom's hand; do ye take and read it over, sign it, by your hearts consenting thereto; and then Christ is yours, and ye are his. But close with Christ in the promise as a free promise, as indeed it is, Is. lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17. Many bar the doors of the gospel-promise with bars of their own making, and then they cry out and complain that they cannot enter in by them. O! say some, if I had so much love, repentance, and brokenness of heart, then I could believe. But I advise you to believe, that ye may get these things, Zech. xii. 10; Acts v. 31. Now, though the promise be written in the Bible only, it is as surely Christ's consent to be yours as if ye had a voice from heaven for it, yea and more surely. But you will say, I dare not meddle with the promise. ANSWER. Then meddle not with Christ, but perish; for there is no meddling with him, but in the gospel-promise. But why is a drowning man so fearful, that he dare not catch hold of a cord, even a silver cord, thrown in to hale him to land? Nay, beloved, be not so foolish: though the promise be, in your eyes, like Moses' rod, turned into a serpent; yet take it by the tail, and it will become a rod in your hand. Hos. xi. 10. "The children shall tremble from the west;" as the Israelites trembled after Saul, that is, followed him trembling, 1 Sam. xiii. 7. So then Christ's bride may sign the contract with a trembling hand, love her Lord with a trembling heart and follow him with trembling legs. And O that all of you would say, though it were with a trembling voice, "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God." If so, ye would not be in vain compelled to come in.