

# An Expository Jotting — The Urgency of Grace.

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*Luke 14.*

E. Dennett.

*Christian Friend, vol. 11, 1884, p. 167.*

Grace is characteristic of the gospel of Luke, and a very striking illustration of its urgency is found in the parable of the great supper. When the supper is prepared, it is simply said that its provider "bade" or "invited" many; and hence, when the servant goes forth, his message to those that were bidden is only, "Come." After, however, these had all refused the invitation they had received, "the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and 'bring in' the poor," etc. Then lastly, when it was reported that "yet there is room," the servant was commissioned to "go out into the highways and hedges, and 'compel them to come in,' that my house may be filled."

This gradation in the nature of the message — "come," "bring in," and "compel them to come in" — is most instructive.

A word or two will explain. Adopting the usually-received interpretation, which we fully endorse — that the first invitation is to the Jewish nation as such, the second, to the remnant, consequent upon the rejection of Christ by "His own;" and the third, to the Gentiles, - we learn that the activity of the heart of God was only intensified by the wickedness of man. It was in grace surely, though in fulfilment of promise, that Christ was presented to the Jew; and it might have been thought that, when that grace was slighted and contemned, God would have retreated, so to speak, from man altogether, into the circle of His own blessedness. But it was not so; for His heart yearned to bless the objects of His counsels of love and redemption, and therefore He, by the power of the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel at Pentecost in Jerusalem, "brought in" the poor of the flock. Nor did this satisfy the extent of His desires; for from that day to this, and from this day till the coming of the Lord, He has been working, and will work, "to compel" poor sinners to come in, and He will not rest until His house is filled — until there is not an empty place left. It might be a profitable question for many of us, whether we are in the power of this compelling urgency of grace in dealing with those who are not saved. For it should never be forgotten, that every believer is intended to be the expression of the heart of God to the world. Another question might be put; viz., Whether the feeble results of the preaching of the gospel in many places may not be traced to a want of apprehension of the nature of the grace that is now going forth towards sinners? This once understood, there would be no expectation from earnestness or appeals, or from anything whatever, save from the power of the Spirit of God. He alone can compel sinners to come in. E. D.

# An Expository Jotting — The Objects of Grace.

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*Luke 14.*

E. Dennett.

*Christian Friend, vol. 11, 1884, p. 186.*

It is interesting to notice also in this chapter (see page 167 last month) the objects of the activity of grace as flowing forth from the heart of God. In a certain sense all men may be said to be this, "for God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son" etc.; and when our blessed Lord tabernacled here, He was light for all. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." In another sense, however, there was limitation, as expressed, for example, when the Lord said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So also in this chapter. As the Lord sat in the Pharisee's house, He said, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind." (vv. 12, 13.) Those who had a claim, as it were, socially or relatively, were to be passed over; and those, according to this instruction, were to be invited, who not only were without claim, but who also were in circumstances of need and sorrow. Accordingly, when the "certain man" (who represents God) makes a great supper, after his first invitations were rejected, he said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt" (the same word as that translated by "lame" in verse 13), "and the blind." Putting these two things together, we may gather some profitable lessons for our edification and guidance.

We learn, first, that the classes represented by these four words (the poor, maimed, lame, and blind) are the special objects of God's heart in the seeking activities of His grace in the gospel. Who, then, are these? By the poor is meant, not exactly those who are so denominated in this world, but rather the poor in spirit (Matt. 5: 3), those who are conscious of poverty before God — whatever their position or earthly circumstances. The largest numbers of these, it is quite true, will be found amongst the class known by us as the poor (see Luke 4: 18; 1 Cor. 1: 26-29); but thanks be to God, whose grace is sovereign in its operation, there are such in every rank and station of life. The true meaning of the term is found in the contrast made by our Lord Himself: "Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. . . . But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation." (Luke 6: 20-24.) It is seen again in Abraham's address to the rich man in torment. He says, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things." (Luke 16: 25.) These are the poor who have nothing for their possession, satisfaction, or enjoyment in the things of the world — those who have been made to feel that they have nothing for, and can bring nothing to, God. It should not, at the same time, be forgotten, that the really poor have ever been, are, and will be, the special objects of God's care and love. (See, for example, Lev. 19: 9, 10, Lev. 23: 22; Psalm 72: 12-14; James 2: 5, etc.)

The other terms are simple. The "maimed" are those who have suffered in some way or other in their bodies, so that they are now, in greater or less degree, helpless; the "lame" are unable to walk aright, and the "blind" cannot see. Rendering these terms typically, we perceive at once the character of those with whom God is specially concerned in the gospel of His grace. And these were just the classes that were drawn to the Lord when on earth — not those that were whole (for they did not need a physician), but those that were sick — not those who were righteous, or possessed merit in their own estimation — the scribes and Pharisees, but publicans and sinners. No! grace has no attraction for, and, we may add, no concern with, those who are rich in their own fancied spiritual wealth — only for wretched, helpless, and needy souls. For grace, itself a gift, delights to give, to make the poor rich, the helpless strong, and the empty full. As we meditate upon it, we can but exclaim, What a heart has the God of all grace! What tender compassion! For now, passing by all that sinners are and have done, the moment they turn in faith to the Lord Jesus, He delights to give and to bless according to the infinite thoughts of His own heart and mind. Yea, more than this — even while they are in all their sorrow and misery He sends forth the glad tidings of the gospel, and by the ambassadors of Christ beseeches sinners, as it were, to be reconciled to Him. Such is the response of God, while working at the same time for the glory of His beloved Son according to His eternal thoughts, to the need, the sorrow, and the misery of man!

Then, secondly, we gather that God's people should be the expression of His heart to these same classes. This is the exact point of our Lord's instruction to the Pharisee at whose table He was sitting. "When thou makest a feast," he said, "invite not thy friends . . . but the poor," etc. The Christian, therefore, is called upon, in this day of grace, to be God's representative. This principle, indeed, obtains in every dispensation; viz., that God's people are to act to those around them according to the revelation He has been pleased to make of Himself. Thus a Jew was to be the expression of Jehovah — of a righteous God; and a Christian is to show forth God as revealed in Christ Jesus.

We must be careful in the application of this truth. What the Lord teaches is, as we have seen, that when God makes a feast, He invites certain classes of people; and hence, that when we make a "feast," we should be in communion with His own heart and mind. Now the feast that God makes is the provision of His grace — the table which He spreads, as we may learn from the next chapter, is in His own house — the Father's house; and it is there that all who accept His invitations are brought to feast with Him in His own joy. It is, in a word, the gospel which, issuing forth from His own presence, leads the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind back to the place whence it came, and gives them the ineffable privilege of fellowship with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ.

Understanding this, we might well challenge ourselves — and especially those of us who are evangelists, wherever found — as to whether we have sufficiently borne in mind this instruction of our Lord; whether, we mean, in the proclamation of the gospel, we have had those before us who are typified by these classes. Some, as may be gathered from any record of religious activity, seek the young, some the aged, some the rich, some the poor; but God always seeks all alike who are in need and sorrow, those who are helpless and blind. It was so also with our blessed Lord Himself. "Come unto Me," He said, "all that labour and are heavy laden:" all such in every rank were the objects of His heart at all times. Nor must our hearts move in a

narrower circle than His own; and should we, acting according to our thoughts, contract this circle, even but for a single occasion, we damage our own souls, as well as misrepresent the all-embracing character of His grace.

Two suggested remarks may be added. It must be patent, in the first place, to any observer (for wisdom is justified of all her children), that God's special blessing ever rests upon those who seek to carry the gospel to poor, wretched, helpless, and benighted souls. Many an activity of this character — otherwise not to be commended — has resulted in such a number of conversions as might well awaken examination on the part of those who have more intelligence in the word of God. It is equally evident, on the other hand, that when Christians or servants have neglected these objects of God's grace, that spiritual blight has settled down upon them, and their labours have resulted in barrenness. The second remark is, that when the Lord was on earth, it was these very classes — as before pointed out — of which He here speaks, found in numbers among the publicans and sinners, that were drawn to His feet. What has happened then, that they are not thus attracted by the preaching of His servants and His people in the present day? Has grace lost any of its beauty or power? Or is it that we have so sadly failed in its presentation? True that the carnal mind is enmity with God, but so it was in the days of our blessed Lord, and proved itself to be so in His rejection and crucifixion. Still the mighty grace that flowed forth in His words and life laid hold of the hearts of the vilest, and drew them irresistibly to His feet. (See Luke 7: 36-50.) And, thank God, the same mighty operation of His grace is still often seen; but the question is, Why so seldom? Surely this Scripture will afford to us all abundant food for reflection; and it will be happier yet if it leads many of us to self-judgment. Oh, that God would come i