Expository Tracts, No. 14.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

BEING

THOUGHTS ON MATT. XXII. 1–14.

BY THE

Right Rev. BISHOP RYLE, D.D.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

DRUMMOND’S TRACT DEPOT, STIRLING.

Price 2s. per 100.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

MATTHEW XXII. 1–14.

1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the marriage.

5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew them.

7 But when the king heard *thereof,* he was wrath: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

10 So those 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.

11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

14 For many are called, but few *are* chosen.

Reader,

The parable recorded in the verses before you is one of very wide signi­fication. In its first application it un­questionably points to the Jews. But you must not confine it to the Jews. It contains heart-searching lessons for all among whom the Gospel is preached. It is a spiritual picture which speaks to you and me this day. Come and see what it contains.

1. Observe, in the first place, that *the salvation of the Gospel is compared to a marriage feast.* The Lord Jesus tells us, that “a certain king made a marriage for his son.”

These words teach us that there is in the Gospel a complete provision for all the wants of man’s soul. It contains a supply of everything that can be re­quired to relieve spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst. Pardon, peace with God, lively hope in this world, glory in the world to come, are set before man in rich abundance. It is “a feast of fat things.” All this provision is owing to the love of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. He has died for sinners on the cross, and He now offers to pardon their sins,—to take them into union with Himself,—to restore them to the family of God as dear children,—to clothe them with His own righteous­ness,—and to give them a place in His glorious kingdom. The Gospel, in short, is an offer of food to the hungry,—joy to the mourner,—a home to the outcast,—a loving friend to the lost. It is glad tidings. God offers, through His dear Son, to be at one with sinful man. Reader, do not forget this. The Gos­pel is a free offer of full provision for all the wants of your soul.

2. Observe, in the second place, that *the invitations of the Gospel are wide, full, broad, and unlimited.* The Lord Jesus tells us in the parable, that the king’s servants said to those who were bidden, “All things are ready: come unto the marriage.”

These words teach us that there is nothing wanting on God’s part for the salvation of sinners’ souls. No one will ever be able to say at last that it was God’s fault, if he is not saved. The Father is ready to love and receive. The Son is ready to par­don and cleanse guilt away. The Spirit is ready to sanctify and renew. Angels are ready to rejoice over the returning sinner. Grace is ready to assist him. The Bible is ready to instruct him. Heaven is ready to be his everlasting home. One thing only is needful, and that is, the sinner must be ready and willing himself.—Reader, let this also never be forgotten. Beware of think­ing that any one but yourself is to blame if you are not saved. God will be found clear of the blood of all lost souls. The Gospel always speaks of sinners as *responsible* and accountable beings. The Gospel places an open door before all mankind. No one is excluded from the range of its offers. Though few enter the strait gate, all are invited to come in.

3. Observe, in the third place, that *the salvation of the Gospel is rejected by many to whom it is offered.* The Lord Jesus tells us, that those whom the king’s servants bade to the wedding “made light of it, and went their way.”

These words teach us that there are always many hearers of the Gospel who derive from it no benefit whatever. They listen to it Sunday after Sunday, and year after year, and yet do not believe to the saving of their souls. They feel no special need of the Gospel. They see no special beauty in it. They do not, perhaps, hate it, or oppose it, or scoff at it; but they do not receive it into their hearts. They like other things far bet­ter. Their money,—their land,—their business,—or their pleasures, are all far more interesting subjects to them than the pardon of their sins or the salvation of their souls.—Reader, this is an awful state of mind to be in, but awfully com­mon. Search your own heart, and take heed that it is not your own. Open sin may kill its thousands; but indifference and neglect of the Gospel kill their tens of thousands. Multitudes will find themselves in hell, not so much because they openly broke the ten command­ments, as because they made light of the truth. Christ died for them on the cross, but they neglected Him.

4. Observe, in the last place, that *all false professors of religion will be de­tected, exposed, and eternally condemned at the last day.* The Lord Jesus tells us, that when the wedding was at last furnished with guests, the king came in to see them, and “saw a man which had not on a wedding garment” He asked him how he came in there with­out one, and he received no reply. The man “was speechless.” And he then commanded the servants to “bind him hand and foot and take him away.”

These words teach us that there will always be some false professors in the Church of Christ, as long as the world stands. In this parable, it has been truly said, “One single cast-away re­presents all the rest.” It is impossible to read the hearts of men. Deceivers and hypocrites will never be entirely excluded from the ranks of those who call themselves Christians. So long as a man professes subjection to the Gos­pel, and lives an outwardly correct life, we dare not say positively that he is an unbeliever. We dare not pronounce decidedly that he has no wedding-gar­ment, and is not clothed in the righte­ousness of Christ.—But there will be no deception at the last day. The unerring eye of God will discern who are His own people and who are not. Nothing but true faith shall abide the fire of His judgment. None but true believers shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. It shall avail the hypocrite nothing that he has been a loud talker about religion, and had the reputation of being an eminent Chris­tian among men. His triumphing shall be but for a moment. He shall stand naked before the bar of God, speechless, self-condemned, hopeless, and helpless. He shall be “cast into outer darkness,” with shame, and reap according as he has sown. No wonder that our Lord says, “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Reader, learn wisdom from the solemn pictures of this parable, and give dili­gence to make your calling and election sure. You are among those to whom the word is spoken. “All things are ready: come to the marriage.” See that you refuse not Him that speaketh. Do not sleep as others, but watch and be sober. Time hastens on. The King will soon come to see the guests.—Have you or have you not got on the wed­ding garment? Have you put on Christ? These are the questions that arise out of this parable. Never rest till you can give them a satisfactory answer! May those heart-searching words often ring in your ears, “Many are called, but few are chosen!”