

Compel Them to Come In

Luke 14:23
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{Refer to the audio file for introductory remarks.}

{Note that the following transcript is slightly adapted from the original and therefore may differ from other printed versions of this sermon.}

Introduction

We'll begin by reading Luke 14, verses 16 to 24. "But He said to him, 'A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; ¹⁷and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'" ¹⁸But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, "I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused." ¹⁹Another one said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused." ²⁰Another one said, "I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come." ²¹And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame." ²²And the slave said, "Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room." ²³And the master said to the slave, "Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. ²⁴For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'""

I feel in such a haste to go out and obey this commandment this morning, by compelling those to come in who are now tarrying in the highways and hedges, that I cannot wait for an introduction, but must at once set about my business.

Hear then, O you that are strangers to the truth as it is in Jesus—hear then the message that I have to bring you. You have fallen, fallen in your father Adam; you have fallen also in yourselves, by your daily sin and your constant iniquity; you have provoked the anger of the Most High; and as assuredly as you have sinned, so certainly must God punish you if you persevere in your iniquity, for the Lord is a God of justice, and will by no means spare the guilty. But have you not heard—has it not long been spoken in your ears—that God, in his infinite mercy, has devised a way whereby, without any infringement upon his honor, he can have mercy upon you, the guilty and the undeserving?

To you I speak; and my voice is unto you, O sons of men! Jesus Christ, very God of very God, hath descended from heaven, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Begotten of the Holy Ghost, he was born of the Virgin Mary; he lived in this world a life of exemplary holiness, and of the deepest suffering, till at last he gave himself up to die for our sins, “the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” And now the plan of salvation is simply declared unto you: “Whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” For you who have violated all the precepts of God, and have disdained his mercy and dared his vengeance, there is yet mercy proclaimed, for “whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “For this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;” “whosoever comes unto him he will in no wise cast out,” “for he is able also to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for us.”

Now all that God asks of you—and this he gives you—is that you will simply look at his bleeding dying son, and trust your souls in the hands of him whose name alone can save from death and hell. Is it not a marvelous thing, that the proclamation of this gospel does not receive the unanimous consent of men? One would think that as soon as ever this was preached, “That whosoever believes shall have eternal life,” every one of you, “casting away every man his sins and his iniquities,” would lay hold on Jesus Christ, and look alone to his cross. But alas! such is the desperate evil of our nature—such the pernicious depravity of our character—that this message is despised, the invitation to the gospel feast is rejected, and there are many of you who are this day enemies of God by wicked works! enemies to the God who preaches Christ to you today! enemies to him who sent his Son to give his life a ransom for many! Strange I say it is that it should be so, yet nevertheless it is the fact, and hence the necessity for the command of the text,—“Compel them to come in.”

Children of God, you who have believed, I shall have little or nothing to say to you this morning; I am going straight to my business—I am going after those that will not come—those that are in the byways and hedges, and God going with me, it is my duty now to fulfill this command, “Compel them to come in.”

First, I must, **find you out**; secondly, I will go to work to **compel you to come in**.

I. Find You Out

First, I must **find you out**. If you read the verses that precede the text, you will find an amplification of this command: “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt [or the crippled], and the blind;” and then, afterwards, “Go out into the highways”—bring in the vagrants, the highwaymen—“and into the hedges”—bring

in those that have no resting-place for their heads, and are lying under the hedges to rest—bring them in also, and “compel them to come in.”

Yes, I see you this morning, you that are **poor**. I am to compel *you* to come in. You are poor in circumstances, but this is no barrier to the kingdom of heaven, for God has not exempted from his grace the man that shivers in rags, and who is destitute of bread. In fact, if there be any distinction made, the distinction is on your side, and for your benefit: “Unto you is the word of salvation sent”; “For the poor have the gospel preached unto them.” But especially I must speak to you who are **poor**, *spiritually*. You have no faith, you have no virtue, you have no good work, you have no grace, and what is poverty worse still, you have no hope. Ah, my Master has sent *you* a gracious invitation! Come and welcome to the marriage feast of his love! “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely.” Come, I must lay hold upon you, though you be defiled with foulest filth, and though you have nothing but rags upon your back—though your own righteousness has become as filthy rags—yet must I lay hold upon you, and invite you first, and even *compel* you to come in!

And now I see you again. You are not only poor, but you are **maimed**! There was a time when you thought you could work out your own salvation without God’s help, when you could perform good works, attend to ceremonies, and get to heaven by yourselves. But now you are maimed; the sword of the law has cut off your hands, and now you can work no longer. You say, with bitter sorrow, “The best performance of my hands, / Dares not appear before thy throne.” You have lost all power now to obey the law. You feel that when you would do good, evil is present with you. You are maimed; you have given up, as a forlorn hope, all attempt to save yourself, because you are maimed and your arms are gone.

But you are worse off than that, for if you could not work your way to heaven, yet you could walk your way there along the road by faith; but you are maimed in the feet as well as in the hands. You feel that you cannot believe, that you cannot repent, that you cannot obey the stipulations of the gospel. You feel that you are utterly undone, powerless in every respect to do anything that can be pleasing to God. In fact, you are crying out the words of the hymn: “Oh, could I but believe, / Then all would easy be, / I would, but cannot; Lord relieve, / My help must come from thee. To you am I sent also! Before you am I to lift up the blood-stained banner of the cross! To you am I to preach this gospel: “Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;” and unto you am I to cry, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely!”

There is yet another class. You are **halt**. You are halting between two opinions. You are sometimes seriously inclined, and at another time worldly amusements call you away. What little progress you do make in religion is but a limp. You have a little strength, but that is so little that you make but painful progress. Ah, limping brother, to you also is the word of this salvation

sent! Though you halt between two opinions, the Master sends me to you with this message, 1 Kings 18:21: “How long halt ye between two opinions? if God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him.” Consider your ways! 2 Kings 20 verse 2: “Set your house in order! For you shall die and not live!” Amos 4:12: “Because I will do this, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!” Halt no longer! But decide for God and his truth!

And yet I see another class: **the blind**. Yes, you that cannot see yourselves, that think yourselves good when you are full of evil, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness; to you am I sent. You, blind souls that cannot see your lost estate, that do not believe that sin is so exceedingly sinful as it is, and who will not be persuaded to think that God is a just and righteous God—to you am I sent. To you too that cannot see the Savior, that see no beauty in him that you should desire him; who see no excellence in virtue, no glories in religion, no happiness in serving God, no delight in being his children; to you, also, am I sent.

Ay, to whom am I *not* sent if I take my text? For it goes further than this! It not only gives a particular description, so that each individual case may be met. But afterwards it makes a general sweep, and says, “Go into the highways and hedges.” Here we bring in all ranks and conditions of men—my lord upon his horse in the highway, and the woman trudging about her business, the thief waylaying the traveler—all these are in the highway! and they are all to be compelled to come in! And there away in the hedges there lie some poor souls whose refuges of lies are swept away, and who are seeking not to find some little shelter for their weary heads, to you, also, are we sent this morning. This is the *universal command*: compel them to come in!

Now, I pause after having described the character—I pause to look at the herculean labor that lies before me. Well did Melanchthon say, “Old Adam was too strong for young Melanchthon.” As well might a little child seek to compel a Samson, as I seek to lead a sinner to the cross of Christ. And yet my Master sends me about the errand! Behold: I see the great mountain before me of human depravity and stolid indifference. But by faith I cry, as in Zechariah chapter 4 verse 7, “Who are you, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.” Does my Master say, compel them to come in? Then, though the sinner be like Samson and I a child, I shall lead him with a thread. If God says do it, if I attempt it in faith it shall be done. And if with a groaning, struggling, and weeping heart, I so seek this day to compel sinners to come to Christ, the sweet compulsions of the Holy Spirit shall go with every word, and some indeed shall be compelled to come in.

II. Compel You to Come In

And now to the work—directly to the work. Unconverted, unreconciled, unregenerate men and women: I am to **compel you to come in**.

Permit me first of all to accost you in the highways of sin and tell you over again my errand. The King of heaven this morning sends a gracious invitation to you. He says, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." Dear brother, it makes my heart rejoice to think that I should have such good news to tell you! And yet I confess my soul is heavy because I see you do not think it good news, but turn away from it, and do not give it due regard.

A. Tell

Permit me to **tell** you what the King has done for you. He knew your guilt; he foresaw that you would ruin yourself. He knew that his justice would demand your blood. And in order that this difficulty might be escaped—that his justice might have its full due, and that you might yet be saved—*Jesus Christ has died*. Will you just for a moment glance at this picture? You see that man there on his knees in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood. You see this next: you see that miserable sufferer tied to a pillar and lashed with terrible scourges, till the shoulder bones are seen like white islands in the midst of a sea of blood. Again you see this third picture: it is the same man hanging on the cross with hands extended, and with feet nailed fast, dying, groaning, bleeding. I thought the picture spoke and said, "It is finished!" Now all this has Jesus Christ of Nazareth done in order that God might consistently with his justice pardon sin. And the message to you this morning is this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." That is, trust him; renounce your works and your ways; and set your heart alone on this man, who gave himself for sinners.

Well brother, I have told you the message. What do you say to it? Do you turn away? You tell me it is nothing to you? you cannot listen to it? that you will hear me another time, but you will go your way this day and attend to your farm and merchandize? Stop, brother! I was not told merely to *tell* you and then go about my business. No; I am told to *compel* you to come in!

And permit me to observe to you before I further go, that there is one thing I can say—and to which God is my witness this morning—that I am in earnest with you in my desire that you should comply with this command of God. You may despise your own salvation, but I do not despise it. You may go away and forget what you shall hear, but please remember that the things I now say cost me many a groan before I came here to utter them. My inmost soul is speaking out to you, my poor brother, when I beseech you by him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore: consider my master's message which he bids me now address to you!

B. Command

But do you spurn it? Do you still refuse it? Then I must change my tone a minute. I will not merely *tell* you the message, and *invite* you as I do with all earnestness, and sincere affection. I will go further. Sinner, in God's name I **command** you to repent and believe! Do you ask me where my authority comes from? I am an ambassador of heaven! My credentials? Some of them are secret, and in my own heart; and others of them are open before you this day in the seals of my ministry: sitting and standing in this hall, where God has given me many souls for my hire. As God the everlasting one hath given me a commission to preach his gospel, I command you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Not on my own authority, but on the authority of him who said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" and then annexed this solemn sanction, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned." Reject my message, and remember: "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, do you suppose, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God." An ambassador is not to stand below the man with whom he deals, for we stand higher. If the minister chooses to take his proper rank, girded with the omnipotence of God, and anointed with his holy unction, he is to *command* men, and speak with *all* authority, *compelling* them to come in. As Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:2, "command, exhort, rebuke with all longsuffering."

C. Exhort

But do you turn away and say you will not be commanded? Then again will I change my note. If that avails not, all other means shall be tried. My brother, I come to you simple of speech, and I **exhort** you to flee to Christ! O my brother, do you know what a loving Christ he is? Let me tell you from my own soul what I know of him. I, too, once despised him. He knocked at the door of my heart and I refused to open it. He came to me, times without number, morning by morning, and night by night; he checked me in my conscience and spoke to me by his Spirit. And when, at last, the thunders of the law prevailed in my conscience, I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind. O I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of him! But what a loving reception did I have when I went to him! I thought he would smite me, but his hand was not clenched in anger but opened wide in mercy! I thought full sure that his eyes would dart lightning-flashes of wrath upon me! But instead they were full of tears! He fell upon my neck and kissed me; he took off my rags and did clothe me with his righteousness, and caused my soul to sing aloud for joy. In the house of my heart and in the house of his church there was music and dancing, because his son that he had lost was found, and he that was dead was made alive.

I exhort you, then, to look to Jesus Christ, and be lightened! Sinner, you will never regret—I will be bondsman for my Master that you will never regret it! You will have no sigh to go back to your state of condemnation; you shall go out of Egypt and shall go into the promised land and

shall find it flowing with milk and honey. The trials of Christian life you shall find heavy, {smiling} but you will find that grace will make them light. And as for the joys and delights of being a child of God (if I lie this day you shall charge me with it in days to come)—if you will taste and see that the Lord is good, I am not afraid but that you shall find that he is not only good, but better than human lips ever can describe!

I know not what arguments to use with you. I appeal to your own self-interests! Oh my poor friend, would it not be better for you to be reconciled to the God of heaven, than to be his enemy? What are you getting by opposing God? Are you the happier for being his enemy? Answer, pleasure-seeker! Have you found delights in that cup? Answer me, self-righteous man! Have you found rest for the sole of your foot in all your works? Oh you that aim to establish your own righteousness, I charge you: let conscience speak! Have you found it to be a happy path?

Ah, my friend, “Why do you spend your money for what is not bread, and your labor for what does not satisfy; hearken diligently unto me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness!” I exhort you by everything that is sacred and solemn—everything that is important and eternal: flee for your lives! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain! Stay not until you have proved, and found an interest in the blood of Jesus Christ, that blood which cleanses us from all sin!

D. Entreat

Are you still cold and indifferent? Will not the blind man permit me to lead him to the feast? Will not my maimed brother put his hand upon my shoulder and permit me to assist him to the banquet? Will not the poor man allow me to walk side-by-side with him? Must I use some stronger words? Must I use some other compulsion to compel you to come in?

Sinners, this one thing I am resolved upon this morning: if you will not be saved you will be without excuse. From the grey-headed down to the tender age of childhood, if you do not this day lay hold on Christ, your blood shall be on your own head. If there be power in man to bring his fellow, (as there is when man is helped by the Holy Spirit) that power shall be exercised this morning, God helping me.

Come, I am not to be put off by your rebuffs; if my exhortation fails, I must come to something else. My brother, I **entreat** you, I entreat you: stop and consider. Do you know what it is you are rejecting this morning? You are rejecting Christ, your only Savior. “Other foundation can no man lay;” “there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved.” My brother, I cannot bear that ye should do this, for I remember what you are forgetting. The day is coming when you will *want* a Savior! It is not long before weary months shall have ended, and your strength begin to decline; your pulse shall fail you, your strength shall depart, and you and the

grim monster, death, must face each other. What will you do in the swellings of Jordan without a Savior? Death-beds are stony things without the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an awful thing to die anyhow; he that hath the best hope, and the most triumphant faith, finds that death is not a thing to laugh at. It is a terrible thing to pass from the seen to the unseen, from the mortal to the immortal, from time to eternity. And you will find it hard to go through the iron gates of death without the sweet wings of angels to conduct you to the portals of the skies. It will be a hard thing to die without Christ.

I cannot help thinking of you. I see you acting the suicide this morning, and I picture myself standing at your bedside and hearing your cries, and knowing that you are dying without hope. I cannot bear that! I think I am standing by your coffin now, and looking into your clay-cold face, and saying, "This man despised Christ and neglected the great salvation." I think what bitter tears I shall weep then, if I think that I have been unfaithful to you, and how those eyes fast closed in death, shall seem to chide me and say, "Minister, I attended the music hall, but you were not in earnest with me; you amused me, you preached to me, but you did not plead with me! You did not know what Paul meant when he said, 'As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.'"

I entreat you: let this message enter your heart for *another* reason. I picture myself standing in the courtroom of God. As the Lord lives, the day of judgment is coming. You believe that; you are not an infidel; your conscience would not permit you to doubt the Scripture. Perhaps you may have pretended to do so, but you cannot. You feel there *must* be a day when God shall judge the world in righteousness. I see you standing in the midst of that throng, and the eye of God is fixed on you. It seems to you that he is not looking anywhere else, but only upon you, and he summons you before him. And he reads your sins, and he cries, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell!"

My hearer, I cannot bear to think of you in that position! It seems as if every hair on my head must stand on end to think of any hearer of mine being damned! Will you picture *yourselves* in that position? The word has gone forth: "Depart, ye cursed." Do you see the pit as it opens to swallow you up? Do you listen to the shrieks and the yells of those who have preceded you to that eternal lake of torment? Instead of picturing the scene, I turn to you with the words of the inspired prophet Isaiah, and I say, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Oh! my brother: I cannot let you put away religion like this! No! I think of what is to come *after* death! I would be destitute of all humanity if I should see a person about to poison himself and did not dash away the cup; or if I saw another about to plunge from London Bridge, if I did not assist in preventing him from doing so! And I should be worse than a fiend if I did not now—with all love, and kindness, and earnestness—beseech you to "lay hold on eternal life," "to labor not for the meat that perishes, but for the meat that endures unto everlasting life"! Some hyper-Calvinist would tell me I am

wrong in so doing. I cannot help it! I must do it! As I must stand before my Judge at last, I feel that I shall not make full proof of my ministry unless I entreat with many tears that you would be saved—that you would look unto Jesus Christ and receive his glorious salvation.

E. Threaten

But does not this avail? Are all our entreaties lost upon you? Do you turn a deaf ear? Then again I change my note. Sinner, I have pleaded with you as a man pleads with his friend, and were it for my own life I could not speak more earnestly this morning than I do speak concerning yours. I did feel earnest about my own soul, but not a whit more than I do about the souls of my congregation this morning! And therefore, if you put away these entreaties I have something else: I must **threaten** you.

You shall not always have such warnings as these. A day is coming, when hushed shall be the voice of every gospel minister, at least for you; for your ear shall be cold in death. It shall not be any more threatening; it shall be the fulfillment of the threatening. There shall be no promise, no proclamations of pardon and of mercy; no peace-speaking blood, but you shall be in the land where the Sabbath is all swallowed up in everlasting nights of misery, and where the preachings of the gospel are forbidden because they would be unavailing.

I charge you then: listen to this voice that now addresses your conscience! For if not, God shall speak to you in his wrath, and say unto you in his hot displeasure what Wisdom says in Proverbs 1: “I called and ye refused; I stretched out my hand and no man regarded; therefore will I mock at your calamity; I will laugh when your fear cometh.”

Sinner, I **threaten** you again. Remember, it is but a short time you may have to hear these warnings. You imagine that your life will be long, but do you know how short it is? Have you ever tried to think how frail you are? Did you ever see a body when it has been cut in pieces by the anatomist? Did you ever see such a marvelous thing as the human frame? “Strange, a harp of a thousand strings, / Should keep in tune so long.” Let but one of those cords be twisted, let but a mouthful of food go in the wrong direction, and you may die. The slightest chance, as we have it, may send you swift to death, when God wills it. Strong men have been killed by the smallest and slightest accident, and so may you. In the chapel—in the house of God—men have dropped down dead. How often do we hear of men falling in our streets—rolling out of time into eternity—by some sudden stroke.

And are you sure that heart of yours is quite sound? Is the blood circulating with all accuracy? Are you quite sure of that? And if it be so, how long shall it be? O, perhaps there are some of you here that shall never see Christmas-day. It may be the mandate has gone forth already, “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.” Out of this vast congregation, I might with

accuracy tell how many will be dead in a year; but certain it is that the whole of us shall never meet together again in any one assembly. Some out of this vast crowd, perhaps some two or three, shall depart before the new year shall be ushered in. I remind you, then, my brother, that either the gate of salvation may be shut, or else you may be out of the place where the gate of mercy stands. Come, then, let the **threatening** have power with you! I do not threaten because I would alarm without cause, but in hopes that a brother's threatening may drive you to the place where God has prepared the feast of the gospel.

And now, must I turn hopelessly away? Have I exhausted all that I can say? No, I will come to you again. Tell me what it is, my brother, that keeps you from Christ. I hear one say, "Oh, sir, it is because I feel myself too guilty." That cannot be, my friend, that cannot be. "But, sir, I am the chief of sinners." Friend, you are not! The chief of sinners died and went to heaven many years ago; his name was Saul of Tarsus, afterwards called Paul the apostle. He was the chief of sinners; I know he spoke the truth. "No," but you say still, "I am too vile." You cannot be viler than the chief of sinners. You must, at least, be second worst. Even supposing you are the worst now alive, you are second worst, for he was chief.

But suppose you *are* the worst. Is not that the very reason why you should come to Christ? The worse a man is, the more reason he should go to the hospital or physician. The more poor you are, the more reason you should accept the charity of another. Now, Christ does not lack any merits of yours. He gives freely. The worse you are, the more welcome you are. But let me ask you a question: Do you think you will ever get better by stepping *away* from Christ? If so, you know very little as yet of the way of salvation at all. No, sir, the longer you stay, the worse you will grow. Your hope will grow weaker; your despair will become stronger; the nail with which Satan has fastened you down will be more firmly clenched, and you will be less hopeful than ever. Come, I beseech you, recollect there is nothing to be gained by delay, but by delay everything may be lost.

"But," cries another, "I feel I cannot believe." No, my friend, and you never will believe if you look first at your believing. Remember, I am not come to invite you to faith, but am come to invite you to Christ. But you say, "What is the difference?" Why, just this, if you first of all say, "I want to believe a thing," you never do it. But your first inquiry must be, "What is this thing that I am to believe?" Then will faith come as the consequence of that search. Our first business has not to do with faith, but with Christ.

Come, I beseech you, on Calvary's mount, and see the cross! Behold the Son of God—he who made the heavens and the earth—dying for your sins! Look to him: Is there not power in him to save? Look at his face so full of pity! Is there not love in his heart to prove him willing to save? Sure sinner, the sight of Christ will help you to believe. Do not believe first, and then go to

Christ, or else your faith will be a worthless thing. Go to Christ without any faith, and cast yourself upon him, sink or swim.

But I hear another cry, “Oh sir, you do not know how often I have been invited, how long I have rejected the Lord.” I do not know, and I do not want to know. All I know is that my Master has sent me, to compel you to come in. So come along with you now! You may have rejected a thousand invitations; don’t make this the thousand-and-first! You have been up to the house of God, and you have only been gospel hardened. But do I not see a tear in your eye? Come, my brother, don’t be hardened by this morning’s sermon. O, Spirit of the living God, come and melt this heart, for it has never been melted, and compel him to come in! I cannot let you go on such idle excuses as that. If you have lived so many years slighting Christ, there are so many reasons why now you should not slight him!

But did I hear you whisper that this was not a convenient time? Then what must I say to you? When will that convenient time come? Shall it come when you are in hell? Will that time be convenient? Shall it come when you are on your dying bed, and the death throttle is in your throat? Shall it come then? Or when the burning sweat is scalding your brow; and then again, when the cold clammy sweat is there? Shall those be convenient times? When pains are racking you, and you are on the borders of the tomb? No, sir, this morning is the convenient time! May God make it so!

Remember, I have no authority to ask you to come to Christ tomorrow. The Master has given you no invitation to come to him next Tuesday! The invitation is, “*Today* if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation,” for the Spirit says “today”! “Come *now* and let us reason together”! Why should you put it off? It may be the last warning you shall ever have. Put it off, and you may never weep again in chapel. You may never have so earnest a discourse addressed to you. You may not be pleaded with as I would plead with you now. You may go away, and God may say, “He is given unto idols, let him alone.” He shall throw the reins upon your neck; and then, mark—your course is sure, but it is sure damnation and swift destruction.

F. Weep and Pray

And now again, is it all in vain? Will you not now come to Christ? Then what more can I do? I have but one more resort, and that shall be tried. I can be permitted to **weep** for you; I can be allowed to **pray** for you. You shall scorn the address if you like; you shall laugh at the preacher; you shall call him a fanatic if you will. He will not chide you; he will bring no accusation against you to the great Judge. Your offense, so far as he is concerned, is forgiven before it is committed. But you will remember that the message that you are rejecting this morning is a message from one who loves you, and it is given to you also by the lips of one who loves you. You will

recollect that you may play your soul away with the devil, that you may listlessly think it a matter of no importance. But there lives at least one who is in earnest about your soul, and one who before he came here wrestled with his God for strength to preach to you, and who when he has gone from this place will not forget his hearers of this morning. I say again, when words fail us we can give tears; for words and tears are the arms with which gospel ministers compel men to come in.

You do not know, and I suppose could not believe, how anxious a man whom God has called to the ministry feels about his congregation, and especially about some of them. I heard but the other day of a young man who attended here a long time, and his father's hope was that he would be brought to Christ. He became acquainted, however, with an infidel; and now he neglects his business, and lives in a daily course of sin. I saw his father's poor pale face; I did not ask him to tell me the story himself, for I felt it was raking up a trouble and opening a sore. I fear, sometimes, that good man's grey hairs may be brought with sorrow to the grave.

Young men, you do not pray for yourselves, but your mothers wrestle for you. You will not think of your own souls, but your fathers' anxiety is exercised for you. I have been at prayer meetings, when I have heard children of God pray there, and they could not have prayed with more earnestness and more intensity of anguish if they had been each of them seeking their own soul's salvation. And is it not strange that we should be ready to move heaven and earth for your salvation, and that still you should have no thought for yourselves, no regard to eternal things?

Now I turn for one moment to some here. There are some of you here members of Christian churches, who make a profession of religion, but unless I be mistaken in you—and I shall be happy if I am—your profession is a lie. You do not live up to it; you dishonor it. You can live in the perpetual practice of absenting yourselves from God's house, if not in sins worse than that. Now I ask such of you who do not adorn the doctrine of God your Savior: do you imagine that you can call me your pastor, and yet that my soul cannot tremble over you and in secret weep for you? Again I say, it may be but little concern to you how you defile the garments of your Christianity, but it is a great concern to God's hidden ones, who sigh and cry, and groan for the iniquities of the professors of Zion!

G. Appeal to the Spirit

Now does anything else remain to the minister besides weeping and prayer? Yes, there is one thing else. God has given to his servants not the power of regeneration, but he has given them something akin to it. It is impossible for any man to regenerate his neighbor; and yet how are men born to God? Does not the apostle say of Onesimus that he was begotten by him in his bonds? Now the minister has a power given him of God, to be considered both the father and the

mother of those born to God, for the apostle said he travailed in birth for souls till Christ was formed in them.

What can we do then? We can now **appeal to the Spirit**. I know I have preached the gospel, that I have preached it earnestly; I challenge my Master to honor his own promise. He has said, "It shall not return unto me void," and it shall not. It is in his hands, not mine. I cannot compel you, but you O Spirit of God who has the key of the heart, you *can* compel! Did you ever notice in that chapter of the Revelation, where it says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," a few verses before, the same person is described as he who has the key of David? So that if knocking will not avail, he has the key and can and will come in. Now if the knocking of an earnest minister prevail not with you this morning, there remains still that secret opening of the heart by the Spirit, so that you shall be compelled.

I thought it my duty to labor with you as though I must do it; now I throw it into my Master's hands. It cannot be his will that we should travail in birth, and yet not bring forth spiritual children. It is with him; he is master of the heart. And the Day shall declare it, that some of you constrained by sovereign grace have become the willing captives of the all-conquering Jesus, and have bowed your hearts to him through the sermon of this morning.