

NUMBER 2500—OR, “ENTRANCE AND EXCLUSION”
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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.”
Matthew 25:10.

DURING the waiting period, the wise and foolish virgins seemed much alike, even as at this day one can hardly discern the false professor from the true. Everything turned upon the coming of the bridegroom. To the ten virgins, that was the chief event of the night. If it had not been for his coming, they would not have gone forth with their lamps. It was because they knew he would surely come that they prepared themselves to join in the marriage procession, and attend him with their songs to the place of his abode. Yet, for a while, he did not come. The sun had gone down, and darkness had stolen over the whole landscape, but the bridegroom did not come. The dews of night were falling fast, yet still he did not come. The hours were long, and slowly passed away, one after the other, yet he did not come. It was waxing toward the middle of the night—a few stars were visible, but there was no lingering light of the day remaining. It was the time of darkness, and the eyes of the waiting virgins grew heavy with watching. Why was the bridegroom so long in coming? They had been told to look for him. They had fully expected him, yet he had not come. There were whispers that it was all a delusion, and that he would *never* come. And there was that guilty sense of slumber which stole over them. In the case of some of the ten, their spirit was willing, but their flesh was weak. But in the case of the others, both flesh and spirit were perverse, so that their sleep became exceedingly deep, as when a man sleeps even unto death.

But the bridegroom did come, as, brothers and sisters, in our case the heavenly Bridegroom will come! However long we may have waited for Him, let us rest assured that He will come! As surely as He came once, so, “unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” It seems to me that it needs less faith to believe in the Second Advent of Christ than in His First Advent. He has been here before, so He knows the way to come again. He has been here before, and worked a wondrous work—surely He will come back to receive the reward of His service! The Good Shepherd came to earth once to lay down His life for the sheep—He will surely come again as the Chief Shepherd to recompense the under-shepherds who have faithfully kept the night watches for Him. Jesus will come again, as surely as the bridegroom came at the midnight hour!

Yes, the bridegroom did come. Despite the waiting time, he did come, and then came the dreadful separation between those who had been waiting for his appearing. Scarcely by any act of his, the foolish and the wise were parted, the one from the other. They were awakened by the sound of his approach—the herald that preceded him cried, “Behold, the bridegroom comes,” and the sleepers were all aroused. Then the true adherents of the bridegroom, the wise virgins, penitent for their guilty sleep, poured the oil into their lamps, which were burning low, and soon they were blazing up clear and bright. As the bridegroom’s procession came near, “they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.” But the foolish virgins—those who had despised the secret stores of oil—those who had never gone to the Divine Spirit for His matchless grace—were separated from their wiser companions. Not, indeed, by any special act of the bridegroom, but as the natural result of their own unprepared condition. They had to go away to buy oil from those who sold it. And when they came back, it was too late for them to go in to the marriage. They came up to the gate of the palace, and found the door fast closed against them—shut forever—and learned that they must abide in the outer darkness, to weep and lament that they were not found worthy to behold the bridegroom’s face, or to enter into his joy.

I am going to talk to you, dear friends, as simply as I can, but with deep soul-earnestness, about the two sets of persons mentioned in the text. First, I will speak of *the ready, and their entrance*—“They that were ready went in with him to the marriage.” And, secondly, I will say something about *the unready, and their exclusion*—“And the door was shut.”

I. First, then, let us think of THE READY, AND THEIR ENTRANCE—“They that were ready went in with him to the marriage.”

Let us meditate a little, first, about the entrance, itself, and then talk together about the persons who enjoyed it.

Concerning their entrance, note that it was *immediate upon the coming of the bridegroom*. As soon as he appeared, there seems to have been no interval, but, at once, “they that were *ready went in* with him to the marriage.” Beloved friends, the manifestation of Christ shall be the glorification of His people! We shall need nothing else but to behold His face, and then our bliss shall be perfect and complete. So each believer says with Job, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” Never entertain the slightest fear of any such purgatorial state as some have begun to dream of again! That lie, which the Reformers rightly called, “purgatory pick-purse,” which filled the pope’s treasury, and was a curse to myriads of immortal souls, was exposed in all its naked ugliness by the light which God gave to Luther and Calvin. Yet now, amid the abounding skepticism of these evil days, there is coming back this foul night-bird, or rather, this dragon of the dark ages—and sometimes even the children of God feel the influence of its pestilential presence! Dear Christian friends, be not afraid of any purgatory! If you die, you shall be absent from the body, and present with the Lord at once, for this shall be your blessed portion in Christ! If you are alive and remain till Jesus comes again, your body shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and you shall rise to meet your Lord in the air, and so shall be forever with Him. But if you have fallen asleep in Jesus, those who are alive at His coming shall have no preference over you, but you shall be raised incorruptible—and in the moment of that rising, when your spirit, by the divine fiat, shall have been reunited with your perfectly purified and glorified body—you shall go in with Him to the marriage, and be forever with Him and like He is! Do not trouble yourself, therefore, about what is to happen, or what is not to happen. Be confident of this—if you sleep, you shall sleep in Jesus—and when you wake up, you shall wake up in His likeness, and you shall never be parted from Him whose company, even now, is your highest source of joy, and whose society shall be your delight forever and ever!

Notice, next, that the entrance of the wise virgins into the marriage feast was not only immediate, it was also *intimate*. “They that were ready went in *with him* to the marriage.” I like that expression, “with him.” I would go nowhere without Him, and if I may go anywhere with Him, wherever He shall lead me, it shall be a happy day to me! And so it shall be to all who love His appearing. You know, beloved, that our Lord Jesus left it in His will that we are to be with Him in His glory. Listen to this clause out of His last will and testament—“Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.” O beloved, you who know what it is to be one with Jesus, crucified with Him, risen with Him, made to sit together with Him in the heavenlies, you, I am sure, will find something more heavenly about heaven than otherwise had been there when that sweet sentence is true of you, “They that were ready went in *with him* to the marriage.” Our Lord Jesus, Himself, shall escort us to our place in glory! He shall conduct us to the sources of highest blessedness, for as the elder said to John in the Revelation, “The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.” This, it seems to me, is the very center of the bliss of heaven. Heaven is like the Eshcol cluster of grapes, but the essence, the juice, the sweetness of the cluster consists in this fact—that we shall be with Jesus—“forever with the Lord.” Ah, me! My brothers and sisters, how else could we ever hope to go in to the marriage if we did not go in with Him—hidden behind Him, covered with His righteousness, washed in His blood? John saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne of God, and before the Lamb—and it was of them that the elder also said, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them.” No one will object to the entrance into glory of those who go in with Him!

Even the pure and holy God will not raise any question as to our entrance if we enter with His Son! All the demands of divine justice will be fully met by the fact that we go in with Him. Covered with His righteousness, adorned with His beauties, inseparably united to His person, the beloved of His heart, we shall go in with Him to the marriage, and none will think of needing to have us excluded.

I am tempted to linger over such a delightful theme as this, but I must not, and I need not, for you can meditate upon it to your heart’s content when you are at home. To my mind there is indescribable sweetness in these words—“They that were ready went in *with him* to the marriage.”

Then, next, notice how *exceedingly joyous* was the entrance. “They that were ready went in with him *to the marriage*.” It was not their portion to stand outside the door, to listen to the music, and enjoy the light that might come streaming through when it was opened for a few seconds—they “went in with him to the marriage.” It was not the intention of our Lord to tell us in this parable in what capacity the saints shall enter heaven. The parable is meant to teach certain lessons, and it explains them very clearly. If it tried to teach us everything, we might miss the most important lesson of all. But from other passages of Scripture we know that we shall go in with Christ to the marriage, not as mere spectators of His joy, as friends of the Bridegroom who rejoice exceedingly in His gladness, but we shall go in with Him to share His bliss. Be it always remembered that sinners though we are, and utterly unworthy of so distinguished an honor, the Lord Jesus says to every believing soul, “I have espoused you unto Myself, to be Mine forever and ever.” Oh, matchless words! You, believer, shall go in with Him to that heavenly marriage feast, as part of that wondrous bride, the Lamb’s wife, who is then to find her bliss forever consummated with her glorious Husband! What a mercy it is to have grace enough to be able to believe this, for it needs much faith to believe that such a distinction shall ever be the lot of those who were once heirs of wrath even as others, and who, by their sins have deserved to be cast into the deepest hell! Yet, beloved, there are no heights in heaven which we shall not climb. There are no joys before the throne of God of which we shall not be partakers! We shall not be present at that wedding feast merely as Christ’s servants, or as on-lookers, or as favored guests—we shall be there to partake to the fullest of all the bliss and glory, ourselves—all the while the object of that innermost love, that most special, most dear and near, and intimate communion with our beloved! We shall forever be one with Christ by conjugal bands. No, more than that, for even conjugal bands are only used as a humble metaphor of the eternal union between our souls and Christ. “This,” said the apostle Paul, when referring to marriage, “*is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*” “*They that were ready went in with him to the marriage,*” right up to the banqueting table, to partake of all the rare dainties gathered from all the ages, brought from all the dominions of the great King, to make high festival for that greatest of all days for which all other days were made, the Day of Judgment itself included!

Even on earth we always properly associate the highest degree of joy with a marriage when it is what it ought to be. If ever there is any joy on earth that belongs naturally to us as beings of flesh and blood, it is upon our marriage day. The wedding of a loving couple is looked forward to with great expectations, and often looked back upon with fond memories. However much of blight and withering blast may, in later life, fall upon that relationship which is commenced upon the marriage day, yet the day, itself, is always the figure and emblem of joy. See, then, what heaven is to be to the people of God—it is a marriage, a perpetual festival, a banishment of everything that is dolorous, a gathering together of all that is joyous. A marriage on earth—well, we know what that is, but a marriage in *heaven*—who can describe that? The marriage of men and women—we are familiar enough with that, but this union of which I am trying to speak is the marriage of the Christ of God with His redeemed people! Earthly marriage is contracted between two sinners, but this heavenly wedding is the marriage of One who is all pure and holy, to another whom He has purified from every stain, or spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—and so made ready for this everlasting union!

“*They that were ready went in with him to the marriage.*” These words sound to my ears and heart like the pealing of wedding bells. Listen! These people had been in the battle, fighting as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, but, by-and-by, they “went in with Him to the marriage.” They had been in their Lord’s vineyard, toiling amid the burden and heat of the day—the sun had looked upon them, and they were bronzed and browned with the burning heat. But in due time they “went in with him to the marriage.” They had sometimes seen their Lord for a season, and then they had missed Him for a while, but they “went in with Him to the marriage.” They had even wandered from Him, sometimes, and darkness had surrounded them. Yes, and they had wickedly fallen asleep when they ought to have watched—but they

“went in with Him to the marriage.” Oh, the *blessedness* of being where all evil is forever ended, and all joy is begun, never to end—all sin and imperfection blotted out by *Christ’s* precious blood—and all holiness and perfection put upon us forever and ever! All this and more I read in the words, “*They that were ready went in with him to the marriage.*”

Then comes this little sentence which is so terrible to the ungodly, but, oh, so sweet to the gracious—“And the door was shut.” These words show that the entrance of the righteous into heaven is *eternal*. The door was shut for two purposes, but chiefly, as I understand it, to *shut in* the godly! And before that door can be opened to let in the wicked, it will have to be opened to let out the righteous! These two declarations of our Lord stand side by side—“These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” If you deny the eternity of the one, you must deny the eternity of the other, for it is the same word in each case! You must break down the door which is the security of the saints within, before there can be a change for the ungodly who are outside—and that can never be! The joy of this marriage feast is eternal joy! This is implied in our Savior’s utterance, “*They that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.*”

I want you, next, to notice who these people were who went in with the Bridegroom. According to the text they were a *prepared people*, a people that were ready—“*They that were ready went in with him to the marriage.*” There are none among the sons of men who are naturally ready to go in to that marriage feast. Before they can enter, they must undergo a wondrous change. They must, in fact, be born-again! Think for a moment what creatures we are by nature, quite unfit to go in with Christ to the heavenly marriage. Then think of what Christ is, so bright, so pure, and so holy—who is she who is fit to go into heaven, to be forever with this glorious Bridegroom? O my soul, you are but dust and ashes, and your Lord is the Sun of righteousness! O my soul, you are, through sin, comparable to a dunghill! And your Savior is infinite perfection. Can you ever be “ready” to go in with Him to the marriage? Not unless that same God who became man that He might be a fit Husband for you, shall *make* you holy, that you may be meet to be wedded to Him forever!

A great change has to be worked in you, far beyond any power of yours to accomplish, before you can go in with Christ to the marriage! You must, first of all, be renewed in your nature, or you will not be ready. You must be washed from your sins, or you will not be ready. You must be justified in Christ’s righteousness, and you must put on His wedding dress, or else you will not be ready. You must be reconciled to God. You must be made like God, or you will not be ready. Or, to come to the parable before us, you must have a lamp—and that lamp must be fed with heavenly oil—and it must continue to burn brightly, or else you will not be ready. No child of darkness can go into that place of God’s light! You must be brought out of nature’s darkness into God’s marvelous light, or else you will never be ready to go in with Christ to the marriage, and to be forever with Him.

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, I pray you often look to your readiness for going in to the marriage. Are you all ready now? If, at this moment, the archangel’s trumpet voice should sound, or if now, as lately happened to certain dear friends of ours, you should be struck down with paralysis or apoplexy, and in a moment, pass away, are you ready for the great change? Are you quite ready to go in with Christ to the marriage? I would advise you not only to be ready in all the great things, but to also be ready in the little things, and in everything that concerns yourself in relation to your Lord. Perhaps you have not yet publicly put on Christ in baptism. Then, in that respect, you are not ready. Do not delay obedience to Christ’s command, remembering His own Words. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” With your mouth confess the Lord Jesus, if with your heart you have believed on Him. Disregard no commands of Christ! Perhaps you have never yet been to His table of communion. If that is the case, I do not think you can call yourself “ready” to go in with Him to the marriage. Perhaps you call these things little matters—and they are small compared with that greater matter of which I have already spoken. But I would not wish you to die with a single command of Christ’s neglected. You have not prayed with your boys and girls yet, have you? Well, then, you are not ready. You have not made your will, you have not set your house in order—I would have you get all such things quite ready, for a little unreadiness may greatly trouble you in your departing moments. You have not yet fulfilled what has been very nearly a vow toward God—you have not yet done what you ought to do of your work for the present generation. You have not yet been to that ungodly friend and warned him, as your heart a little while ago prompted you to do. I would like to have you, my brother, or sister, in such a state that if you fell down dead on your way home, tonight, others might regret it, but you would be thankful that for

your sudden death was sudden glory! Mr. Whitefield used to say that he did not like to go to sleep at night if he had left his gloves out of his hat where he might find them in the morning. It is delightful to feel, “All is right between God and my soul, between myself and my wife and my children, and all my surroundings. Now let death come when it will! Let the sweet chariot swing low—as the Jubilee Singers’ song quaintly puts it—and let it bear my soul away up to the heavenly country where I shall go in with Him to the marriage.”

Be ready, dear friends, be ready! Especially be ready in the great matter of salvation, but see that you are ready in *everything*. You know that when you are going to see a very special friend, or some person of importance, you put on your best coat, and everything that will make you ready to see him, and afterwards, when you get near the friend’s door, or the great man’s mansion, I notice that you brush off any little dust from the street that may have been blown upon your garments—and so you get quite ready to meet him when he appears. So, in *spiritual* affairs, even if you have on your best robe, yet there may still be a little brushing needed—and I would have you do it, so that it may be said of you without anything to qualify it—“they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut.”

I read, in an American tract, a little sketch written by a gentleman who, having often to cross the great lakes, was in the habit of providing himself with a life belt in case of need. One night, while he was asleep, an alarm was raised, and he rushed on deck with his life belt round him, but found that there was no cause for fear. He went back downstairs, and as he lay in bed, he had something like a dream, though it was really a waking reverie, and it took this shape. He thought he was on board the great vessel in which all of us are floating on the broad sea of time, and that a great and terrible storm came on. There were some men on deck with life belts round them. They had been laughed at while the weather was calm and the sea was smooth, but, as they stood there, with the vessel rocking, and the timbers straining, there were none to mock them, but many who greatly envied the quiet peacefulness which rested on their countenances. You know who those men are, and what their perfection is. Faith in Jesus is the great life belt—let the tempest come when it may, faith in Christ will enable us to swim through every flood till we reach the happy shores of heaven!

As this gentleman stood on the deck, and looked about him, he heard one man say, “I was going to buy one of those belts. I lived just opposite the shop where they were sold, and I was often told by friends that I had better get one at once, and I meant to—but I put it off, and started just a little too late to get it, so I was obliged to come without it, though I meant to have one.” The gentleman saw this man washed overboard, as the others were who had not a life belt, and his good intention could not save him. No doubt there are many here who have meant to get the *spiritual* life belt, and they mean to do so now, so they say. Ah, heaven is being filled with people who have believed in Jesus—and hell is being filled with people who *meant to* believe in Jesus, but did not! That is the difference between the two classes, but what a difference it will make between them when they come to die! These are the people who crowd the corridors of hell—men and women who *meant to* trust the Savior, but who never did. They lived just opposite the places where these life belts were to be had, and they meant to have had them—but they had them not when the last great storm came on—and so they were lost, and lost forever!

There was another man who said, “I have been across this sea so often without a belt that I thought I would run the risk once more.” He, too, was washed away. And there are some of you, my hearers, who say, “I have lived twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years, and I am not dead yet! I will run the risk for another year.” Really, nowadays, nobody seems to grow old. You meet a man of 75 or 80, and he thinks that he will be old, some day, but he has known somebody who lived till he was 99—and he thinks he shall reach the same age! I have heard of an aged farmer who wanted to buy his neighbor’s field. He was 80, and his neighbor was five years younger, so, when his neighbor would not sell him the land, he said to him, “Ah, well, never mind. You are an old man, and I can buy it when you are dead!” That is just the way people talk. “All men think all men mortal but themselves.” Here was a man who was five years older than the other, yet he was going to buy the field after the younger man was dead! It is such people who say, “I have been sailing over this sea so long without a life belt, I will risk it still longer.” Thus they, also, are lost!

There was another man who ran to his trunk to get his life belt—he pulled up the lid, and took out the belt—but he found it was out of order, and quite useless. The fact was, it was a bad one when he bought it—and after carrying it about with him for a little while, he became weary of such a useless appendage, so he threw it into his trunk—and now that he really needed preservation from the storm, it

was of no use to him. You are here, sir, I know you! You used to make a profession of religion. You had a life belt once, so you thought, but it was not a good one, or you would have it now. It was one that *looked* like the right thing, and you wore it for a while. You used to be at the prayer meeting, you even became a member of the church! You carried your religion for a time, but what has become of it? Where were you last night? I repeat the question—*Where were you last night?* If the devil had laid hold upon you, and taken you down to his own dominions, there would have been none who would have cried, “Stop, thief!” when he flew away with you, for they would have known that he was only taking his own property which he had found on his own premises! Yet you did once make a profession of religion—you used to sit at the communion table. Possibly you were even baptized. But where is your life belt now? It is gone! God save you who have become backsliders, lest you also prove to be apostates! If you have turned back, then return, return, return, while yet there is time, while yet there is hope for you! And if you never were converted, may God begin the gracious work within you even now!

There was another one on board who had a life belt, and he seemed very pleased when he put it on, but when the waves washed him off the vessel, he floated for a few moments, and then down he sank. The fact was, his belt was a counterfeit! Somebody had told him that the other sort was so very expensive, and here was one that looked even better. True, there was a whisper that it would not stand the necessary tests, but the man did not care much about that, for his belt looked as good as the genuine one, and he had the credit of standing with those sensible people who had the true thing, so it answered very well *until he came into the surging sea*. So there may be some of you here who have counterfeit life belts. You are members of a church, you come to the communion table, and everybody respects you. Ah, but with a sham religion, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? What will you do when heart and flesh fail? Oh, before it is too late, may God take the sham away from you, and give you genuine godliness—a new heart and a right spirit!

As the gentleman looked round him, he saw yet another of the passengers—a young man who was clinging to someone else who had on a life belt. He was crying to him, “Let me lay hold on you! Will not your belt be sufficient to sustain both of us?” But the other answered, “It will only suffice for one. It will only keep one afloat.” Then the gentleman thought of our Savior’s parable of the ten virgins, and of what the foolish said unto the wise, “Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.” But the wise answered, “Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you.” So let us remember that nothing but *personal* piety will avail—the religion of another can be of no service to you! Our Lord’s message to all is, “You must be born-again,” and there is no such thing as being born-again by proxy! You must fly to Jesus for refuge, and there is no one who can do this for you. You must, by the Holy Spirit’s power, trust in Christ for yourselves! No one can believe for you!

I rejoice that there are so many here who have on the genuine gospel life belt. Standing in Christ Jesus, they are not afraid—

***“No condemnation do they dread.
For Jesus is their all.”***

They can without a tremor face floods or flames, and the devouring deep! They can even be—

“Fearless of hell and ghastly death,”

knowing that they shall be safely landed on heaven’s peaceful shore, to go no more out forever!

II. I am almost thankful that I have only a few minutes to spend upon the second part of my subject—THE UNREADY, AND THEIR EXCLUSION. I will try to say much in a few words—and I beg you to let every word abide with you.

What, then, was this exclusion? “The door was shut.” It was not ajar, it was shut! And it was so tightly closed that *there was a complete severance* between the guests inside, and the too-late foolish virgins outside.

Yet, *this severance was perfectly just*. The foolish virgins ought to have been there on time. They ought to have gone in with the bridegroom. Was it not their very office to attend him, and accompany him home? The time for entering in had fully come—it was the right and proper time. The bridegroom had given them all that night to get ready, and they had even complained of the length of the delay before he came so, when the door was at last shut, it was very late. They had had all that time in which to get the oil, and to trim their lamps. It was not as though the bridegroom had come in the first watch of the night, and they had said, “We had not time to trim our lamps.” No, it was not so. So, dear friends,

you have had all this life, all these years of your Lord’s long-suffering and patient entreaty—and it will be just that the door should be shut when your last hour shall come. Oh, be wise before it is too late!

When “the door was shut,” *the exclusion was final*. In all my searching of the Word of God, I have never found any kind of hope that the door, once shut, will ever be opened again. There may be a “larger hope” indulged in by some, but I implore you never to risk your souls upon that rotten plank, for there is no Scripture warrant for it whatever! Even if there were, what larger hope do you need than that which the gospel itself affords? Why do you not get ready to enter in with Christ to the marriage? Why be left to tarry outside? What is there in the cold midnight that should tempt you to delay with the risk of never being able to enter the door? If there were any such larger hope as deludes so many, it still must be a desperate risk to trust to it. They also who talk about annihilation, or restitution, at any rate offer you nothing that ought to charm you away from immediate faith in Christ, and immediate and everlasting salvation by Him. So far as you, yourself, are concerned, it should cease to be an awful thing that, in the world to come, “There are no acts of pardon passed.” Why should you throw away the certainty of a present salvation and immediate deliverance from the curse, which you may have at this moment—which you shall have at once if you believe in Jesus—under some foolish dream that perhaps the door of mercy may open after ages of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? No, rather be ready to enter in with Christ to the marriage, for, as the Lord lives, I cannot clear my soul of all responsibility unless I tell you that, as I read the Bible more and more, I am more and more certain that when that door has once been shut, it will never again be opened to any living soul! Where death meets you, judgment will find you, and there you will remain to all eternity! I pray you, risk not your eternal destiny, but, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Who were these persons who were shut out when the door was closed? *They bore the name of virgins*, yet the door was shut against them. They were not rank outsiders, nor mere tramps of the street. They were not infidels, not agnostics, but members of the church! They were called virgins, yet against them the door was shut. They also had lamps—lamps that once burned as brightly as others. There was, for a while, no difference between the luster of their lamps, and the luster of the wisest, yet they were shut out. They had at least some oil—they were, for a time, companions of the wise virgins. They went out with them to meet the bridegroom, and the wise virgins, probably, never suspected that these others were foolish, until, in the middle of the night, they found, too late, that their lamps were going out. O sirs! O sirs, shall we drink out of the same communion cup, and eat of the same bread at the Lord’s table, and be reminded of His broken body, and His shed blood, and yet shall some of us be shut in with God forever, and shall some of you be shut out forever because you have not received the Holy Spirit, because you have not the secret inward store of the oil of grace? May God prevent it by His grace!

Notice that *these people acted in much the same way as those acted who went in with the bridegroom*. They went forth to meet the bridegroom, they went on the same road, and at the same rate as the others went, and they went to sleep, alas, as the others went to sleep! They awoke as the others awoke, and they began to trim their lamps as the others were trimming theirs. Their spot seemed to be the spot of God’s children, and they appeared to have many of the marks of the election of grace—yet they were not of it, nor in it, for they had no oil in their vessels with their lamps, no grace, no indwelling of the Holy Spirit, no supernatural operation of Him who works in the saints to will and to do of His own good pleasure. They were so like the real bride of Christ, that only the Bridegroom could tell the difference until the midnight came—and then the difference was apparent to all observers!

It seems to me, also, that these persons who were shut out, *were people who knew something about prayer*. They did not, that night, for the first time pick up the agonized cry, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” They had probably been *habitués* of prayer meetings. They had been where people called Christ, “Lord,” and they used that formula themselves. Perhaps they might have said, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works?” Yet the door was shut against them, and they, outside, knew something of what was going on inside, and therefore would gnash their teeth all the more because they could not enter! The door was shut against those who had seen the light of God, but whose lamps had gone out! They had been carrying in their hands the very lamps which entitled them to claim a place in the procession, but those lamps had gone out—and therefore they were not entitled to any such place—and the door was shut

against them! O you who are only *professors* of religion, will you shut yourselves outside the door of mercy? You will do so if you neglect to obtain that secret oil of grace which can only be supplied by the Holy Spirit!

Before another Sunday comes around, your preacher may be suddenly struck down, as one of our brothers has been. I may never have another opportunity of speaking to you who are professors, and warning you to make sure that you are also *possessors*, and that you really have the grace of God in your souls. Or, possibly, some of you may be taken *away* without a moment’s warning, as one of our friends has been. Suppose that then you could turn round upon me, in another world, and say, “Preacher, we heard you again and again. We listened to all that came from your lips. We even came out on Thursday nights to listen to you, yet you prophesied smooth things to us, and you said, ‘Peace, peace, when there was no peace.’” I pray God that I may have no man’s blood upon the skirts of my garments in that last tremendous day, and therefore I bid you, now, to escape from the wrath to come! Flee to Christ, flee to His dear cross, and look up to His bleeding wounds, for—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

Flee from your sins, flee from yourselves! Flee from any worldly pursuits which entangle you, and put your trust in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and from your heart say—

*“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress,*

“I will go in with You to the marriage, and when the door is shut, I shall be on the right side of it—

*“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”*

The Lord save us all, for His name’s sake! Amen.

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