

The Man Without A  
*Wedding Garment*

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#### SCRIPTURE LESSON

St. Matthew 22:1 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 wroth: 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.

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The Gospel of Matthew 22:1-14

"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kindgom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. 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. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was angry and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then with he to his servants. The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 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. And when the king came in to see the guests he saw there a man which had not on a wed-

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ding garment: And he saith unto him Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 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. For many are called, but few are chosen." These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, as they are recorded in the Gospel of Matthew.

I want to especially call to your attention the eleventh and twelfth verses of this lesson. "When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment, and he was speechless."

It hardly seems possible that this could be an accurate account of the way intelligent people would treat an invitation from the God of this universe. You would think that when the God of this universe goes to the trouble and expense, to prepare and make ready a great banquet in honor of his only Son, and sends out invitations to people to come and be his honored guests at such a banquet, that intelligent people would put forth every effort they possibly could to prepare themselves and attend. I don't know what your political affiliations are and I don't know what your attitude is toward the present President of the United States, but I'll venture to say, that if the President should send you an engraved invitation

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saying that he was going to give a banquet on next Saturday night at the White House in honor of his only son, and that he invited you to be his guest; regardless of your political affiliations, regardless of your present attitude toward the President of the United States, you would consider such an invitation as that a great honor. You would certainly want your neighbors and friends to know about it, and I imagine you would want a piece put in the society column of the paper stating that you had been invited to be the guest at the White House at a banquet on next Saturday night. I'll venture to say that you would put forth great effort and possibly go to great expense to attend such a banquet as that.

I remember when we were pastor of the Central Methodist Church in Kings Mountain, North Carolina, we had the Sesqui-centennial Celebration of the battle of Kings Mountain, that great battle that proved to be the turning point in the Revolutionary War. We invited the President of the United States, Mr. Herbert Hoover, down to be the principal speaker. The Ambassador of England was invited. In fact, Mrs. Church and I had the privilege and the honor of entertaining him for a short period of time. Governors were there from about six or eight different states.

We built a large platform in the center of Kings Mountain where the President and the British Ambassador and ether dignitaries were to be seated and review the parade that was to be given that day.

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They estimated that seventy-five thousand people were there for that great celebration.

I happened to be on the committee of arrangements for that celebration in Kings Mountain. I was astonished at the large number of people of all walks of, life who wrote in, and not only asked, but demanded that they be granted the privilege of sitting on that review platform with the President while the parade went by. People of culture, education, and refinement just stampeded and almost ran over one another to get upon that platform :so they could be close to the President of the United States.

And yet, Jesus tells, us in this parable that God is preparing a banquet in honor of his only Son, and that he has sent out urgent invitations that people make ready and plan to come to that banquet; but Jesus says, "They would not come." And when the king sent out his servants again, and urged them to come, they still ignored his invitation. They just went their way, some to their farms, some to their merchandise, and some of them even became angry. with the servants and entreated them spitefully and slew them.

Jesus says that is the attitude that people take toward God's invitation, and certainly that. is the attitude that the people took during the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember that when he himself pleaded with them and urged them to accept his invitation, they became angry with him and killed him. And people are taking that same attitude today. Many

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people are going on about their business; actually, they act as if they thought they were going to live a million years. And when they die, they act as if they think that will be the last of it. They just go on about their business. We have seen that illustrated in this revival meeting, we see it illustrated day after day. People just go on about their business and ignore the most vital thing in all the world. Some of them, if you become a little too persistent and too insistent that they do something about it, get insulted and become angry, and want to fight back at the servants. Jesus said, that when the king heard thereof, when he learned the attitude that the people had taken toward his invitation and toward his servants, that he became angry, and sent out his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their cities.

### GOD'S WRATH AND JUDGMENT

I know that there are a lot of people today who do not believe that God becomes angry. They do not believe in the wrath of God; they do not believe in eternal punishment. In fact, I was helping a preacher in a revival meeting down in North Carolina, in what is said to be one of the richest Methodist churches in North Carolina. They claim to have twenty one millionaires in that one church. Naturally, the pastor of the church is very liberal in his theology. One day as we sat in the parsonage, we were talking together and I said something about eternal punishment. And, this preacher

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said, "Oh, I don't believe in eternal punishment; that's not my conception of God." Well, I asked, "Brother, what is your conception of God, and where did you get your conception of God?" I said, "When I hear some of your liberalist talk about your conception of God, I feel like saying to you in the words of the great apostle Paul, "Whom you ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you'. "I said, Brother, the God that I worship is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God that was revealed by Jesus Christ, and the God that is set forth in the New Testament - that's the God I worship. Certainly, Jesus Christ taught that God becomes angry, and that God will visit judgment upon people."

Friends, we need to remember that Jesus Christ not only told us about a place of many mansions, but he told us of a place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. He says that he will say unto them on the left hand, "Depart from me ye cursed unto everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." "And, these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal!" Jesus not only taught us about eternal life, but he also taught us about eternal punishment. Jesus not only taught us about the love of God, but he also taught us about the wrath of God. And, Jesus himself not only revealed the love of God, but he revealed the wrath of God.

Friends, the Christ who took little children up in his arms and blessed them, and who looked upon people

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with compassion, is the same Christ who stood in the temple with blazing eyes, and whiplash in his hands, turned over the money changers' table and drove them out of his presence and said, "This house was meant to be a house of prayer and you made it a den of thieves." And the same Christ who stood and looked upon sinners with compassion, stood with blazing eyes and said to the Pharisees, "You hypocrites, you vipers, you whited sepulchers, how shall you escape the damnation of hell?" "It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than it will for you. You won't go in and you won't let anyone else go in. You are like whited sepulchers. You are whitewashed on the outside, but inside is rottenness and corruption and dead men's bones."

And Christ was revealing God just as much then as when he took little children up in his arms and blessed them. In fact, I believe that Christ as he dies on the cross not only reveals the love of God for the sinner, but he reveals the wrath and judgment of God against sin.

Friends, if you think sin is a little thing in the sight of God, then stand at Calvary and see Jesus Christ as he hangs there and dies; hangs between heaven and earth and cries out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And, stop to remember that he is dying in your stead, that he is paying the price of your redemption, that he is suffering the consequences of your sin, and you will come to see that sin is not a

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little thing in the sight of God.

I wrote a man yesterday, who had written me from over in Ohio, kind of sneering at the idea of eternal punishment, and asked me how I reconciled it with certain other passages. I wrote him starting, "Whether I can reconcile it or not, it is still true that Jesus did teach eternal punishment, and it is still true that He did say that He will say to them on the lefthand, 'Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" I also stated, "Whether you believe it or not, doesn't make a bit of difference in the world, it is still true."

I had a very dear friend down in the Western North Carolina Conference. He was one of the great preachers of our conference. In fact, he came very near being elected a bishop. I helped him in a revival meeting one time before he died, and he told me this striking story. He said he went down to the great Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, to hold a revival meeting, and there he met a fine outstanding couple. They were devout, consecrated people, wealthy and well-to-do, and they had a son who had gone off to a university, and had come under the influence of a skeptical professor, who had destroyed his faith in God, and in the Bible as the inspired word of God. The young man came back very cynical and skeptical in his attitude. He would not even attend church, he made fun of religion. Of course, it broke his father's and mother's heart, and they were greatly

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concerned about him. So, they invited my friend, Doctor Abernathy, into their home with the hope that he would make contact with their son, and might be able to help him.

Doctor Abernathy went into this home and he and the young man did become very chummy, because they had a lot of things in common. Doctor Abernathy was a brilliant, highly educated man. One day as he and this young man were walking in the flower garden, the young man said to him, "Doctor, I don't see how you can be a Christian, a highly educated, intelligent man like you; I don't see how you can be a Christian." Doctor Abernathy replied, "I have no trouble being a Christian, it is the most pleasant thing in the world to me." The young man said, "But, Doctor, I don't see how you can accept the Bible as the inspired word of God.: it is full of contradictions." And Doctor Abernathy replied, "Why I wasn't aware of that fact, I have been studying the Bible for many years, and I didn't know it was full of contradictions. Suppose you point out some of them to me." The young man said, "Well, doesn't the Bible say, God is love?" He said, "Certainly, it says that, and I believe it with all my heart." "Well," he said, "doesn't the Bible say God is a consuming fire? He said, "Certainly, it says that, and I believe that with all of my heart." And the young man said, "Well, Doctor, how can you reconcile those two statements. How can God be love and at the same time be a consuming fire?"

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Doctor Abernathy said, "I pointed to a flower growing there at my feet, and I said to the young man, You see that flower there, it couldn't live without the sun, it gets its beauty, its life from the sun. If it weren't for the benefits and blessing of the sun that flower would either die or be a pale, sickly thing. Isn't that right?" The young man said, "Yes sir, that's right." Doctor Abernathy said, "I reached down and I just pulled the flower tip by the roots and dropped it right back where it had been before. I said to the young man, Now, what will happen to that flower?" "Why", he said, "it will wither, it will die, it will parch." He said, "What will kill it, what will parch it?" He said, "The sun!" He said, "Why that's strange, you just now stood there and told me that flower couldn't live without the sun, that it got its life and light and beauty from the sun. Now, you turn around and tell me that the sun will parch and kill that flower. That sounds like a contradiction to me. How do you reconcile those two statements?" And the young man said, "But Doctor, the roots of the flower are out of the ground now, it is not in right relationship to receive the benefits and blessings of the sun." And Doctor Abernathy replied, "Yes, young man, that same thing is true with reference to God. If you are rooted and grounded in Christ, living in harmony with God's plan and purpose for your life, then God is love, and God is life, and God is beauty; but if you are out of Christ, and out of harmony with God, then God

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becomes a consuming fire to you." He said, "It isn't any change in the nature of God, it altogether depends upon your attitude and your relationship to him."

Friends, that is eternally true. There are people right here today, if they should suddenly drop dead, and be translated into the presence of Jesus Christ, it wouldn't be heaven to them, it would be hell of the very worse sort. They wouldn't enjoy heaven. They have hated righteousness, they have loved sin, despised the church and the fellowship of God's people. Can you imagine a person like that having to spend eternity in the presence of the great, Holy God of this universe, and listen to the angelic creatures as they shout, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of hosts?" That wouldn't be heaven to them. And whether we believe in the wrath of God or not, it is a reality. Jesus said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

It is certainly true that the first part of this parable has literally been fulfilled. The people who received God's first invitation were the Jews. They were the ones that rejected, and as a judgment upon them, and listen friends, it wasn't an unfair judgment, Jesus Christ stood and wept over Jerusalem, and said, "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets and killest them, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her brood under her wing, but ye would not. If you could have only known

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the day of your visitation, but now your house is left unto you desolate."

In less than seventy years' time, the Roman army came up and besieged the city of Jerusalem, and the streets ran red with human blood. More than a million people lost their lives in that siege. Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jews as a nation have been a scattered, dispersed nation ever since; and it came because they rejected Jesus Christ, God's own Son. Friends, as certain as I stand here this morning, and as certain as God is on his throne, if we despise, spurn and reject his invitation he will reject us. Not because he is mad at us, not because he wants to be arbitrary, but it is the only thing that he can do.

### THE PART WAS HARD TO UNDERSTAND

I'll be honest with you, the second part of this parable was quite a puzzle to me as a young preacher. I used to read it, and puzzle over it a great deal. It's that part you remember, after the first people rejected the invitation, the king said, "Now they were not worthy; he said go out into the highways and the dredges and invite them to come." Listen, if you don't accept God's invitation, and if you don't prepare to go to the wedding supper of the Lamb, you are not going to frustrate the plan of God. You can lose your own soul, but God is going to have guests at the wedding supper. There will not be any "For Rent" signs on the mansions of glory, everyone of them is going to have

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an occupant. Everyone of them is going to have an inhabitant. We can go on our way and reject God's invitation, but God will send the invitation out to others, and keep sending it until the invitation has gone around the world and reached all mankind.

There was one man on this second round who accepted the invitation. He came in response to the invitation of the king, and the only thing that is said against that man is that he did not have on a wedding garment. And, for that reason, and that reason alone, the king said to the servants, "Bind him, hand and foot, take him away and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

As a young preacher, I used to read that and say, "Well I can't see that. Well, I declare, something must be wrong there, for surely that isn't the way God would treat a man who has gone to the trouble to come, in response to the invitation, and then just because he doesn't have on a certain kind of garment, banish him from his presence into outer darkness. Surely, there is some mistake."

Then, I'd read it, and study it, and I couldn't understand why that fellow stood there like a dumbbell and didn't offer an excuse to the king. I thought if I had been in that man's place, when the king said to me, "Friend, how tamest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?" I would have said, "Well, you

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see it's like this, I'm a poor man. I don't have any money. I've been out of work, and I don't have a nickel in my pocket. Fact is, I have not had a square meal for two days. I was walking down the street, your servant came rushing up to me and he told me that this banquet was being given, that the oxen, and the fatlings were already killed, and everything was ready and that I could come. Certainly, I wanted to come; I'm hungry, but I didn't have any money to go out and buy a wedding garment. This is the best I have. I wish I did have a better garment than this, but it's the best I have, and so I just came with the garment I had on." I thought that would have been a good, legitimate excuse.

And then I thought, if I had been in that man's place I would have said to the king, "Well, you see it's like this I was walking along down the street, your servant came rushing up to me and said that you were going to have this banquet, and that I was invited, and the oxen and the failings were killed, and everything was ready, to come at once, and really I didn't have time to get out and get a wedding garment. Certainly, I know this one isn't fit to wear in your presence, but I didn't have any money to buy one, and I didn't have time to get out and borrow one, and so I came just as I was." I thought that would have been a good, legitimate excuse.

Then I thought in the third place, if I had been in that man's place, I would have said to the king, "Well,

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you see, it's like this: I was walking along down this street there, and your servant came rushing up to me and told me about this banquet, told me what you were going to have and all of that, but he didn't say anything about having to wear a certain kind of garment. He didn't tell me that I was supposed to have on a wedding garment. If I had known that I was supposed to wear a wedding garment, then I would have tried to comply with your request, but since I didn't know t, I just came like I was." And I thought that would have been a good, legitimate excuse.

After I had been preaching a short time, I got hold of a book written by Dr. Edersheim, one of the great Bible scholars of the past, a man who was a real authority on the customs that prevailed in the days of Jesus, and, in that book I read a description of the kind of banquet that Jesus is talking about in this parable. And, Dr. Edersheim, especially emphasized the fact, that when a great king made a marriage like that for his son he always furnished the wedding garments. He purchased them, he provided them without any cost to the guests. As the guests came in the door, he had a servant there, and the servant would take their street garments (you know they didn't wear suits like we wear now, they just wore long flowing robes and they could just lay one off, and put another one on), and this man stood at the door, and as the guests came in he would say, "Here is your wedding garment, I'll take the one you have on." He

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would lay it off over here, and each one went in wearing the wedding garment because the king had provided it. When I read that, the whole thing opened up to me. I saw the application of it, I saw why that man was speechless. He didn't have an excuse. He couldn't say that he was too poor to buy a wedding garment, because he didn't have to buy one. The king had purchased it for him. It was furnished free, and all he had to do was to put it on, and wear it to the honor and the glory of the king and his son. And, I saw the spiritual application of it.

You know friends, we don't have to have money to be saved. You can come and buy without money, and without price. Now the invitation is, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." The garment has already been purchased. Jesus Christ has already gone to Calvary, and poured out his life's blood in order to redeem us from sin, and to provide for us a garment of righteousness that we can put on and wear in the presence of God, and know that it will be acceptable. This man couldn't say that he did not have time to get a wedding garment, because he did have time. He had all the time in the world that was needed. He had just as much time as any other guest there. All he had to do was lay aside his old garment and put on the wedding garment, and he was ready to stand in the presence of the king.

Listen friends, not a single person will ever be able to stand in the presence of Christ, and say that he or

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she did not have time to get saved. You may be busy about other things, and you may be so preoccupied that you don't have time to go to a revival meeting, and you don't have time to go to church except on Sunday morning, but listen, you have ample time to get right with God. If you never had another chance until this morning, you have time right now. For now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation. If your heart should quit beating right now, and you should fall off that seat dead, and be ushered into the presence of Christ unprepared, you would have to admit that you had had time. You have had opportunity after opportunity. God has thrown one chance after another across your pathway. You'll never be able to stand in the presence of Christ, and say that you didn't have time to get ready to meet him. There have been many persons who thought they could wait until their deathbed, and then make it right with God. Some of them have made it right on their deathbed; but friends, that is a dangerous thing to do. Now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation. If you do not have on the wedding garment of salvation, let me plead with you, let me exhort you, don't put it off, don't take any chance, don't miss this God-given opportunity. Put on the wedding garment now while you have the time and the opportunity.

This man could not say he did not know that he had to have on a wedding garment. If that man had offered

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that excuse, then that servant would have immediately stepped forward and said, "Sir, that man is telling something that isn't true. You entrusted me with the privilege and the responsibility of standing at the door, handing out these wedding garments, and that man is implying that I failed in my duty and responsibility. That man did know, for I met him at the door and I pled with him and tried to get him to put on this wedding garment, but he spurned it and rejected it.

Listen friends, as much as I would hate to see any soul eternally lost, I warn you, don't you try to stand before God and tell him you did not know that you had to have on the wedding garment of salvation. For if you do, I will have to stand and witness against you, and every other faithful preacher of the Gospel who has ever preached to you, will have to stand and witness against you. I say to you this morning, upon the authority of God's word, "Except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye can in nowise enter the kingdom of heaven."

I have never been to Main Street Methodist Church before, and likely as not I'll never come back again, and that's why I stand here this morning, as God's ambassador, to say to you, upon the authority of God's word, that unless you have your sins forgiven, and

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unless you are born again, God will banish you from his presence into outer darkness and eternal despair. I am cabled of God to be his ambassador and I must answer to him and to you. I'll meet every one of you at the judgment bar of God and have to give an account to God for the way I have preached to you this morning, and during this revival meeting.

I had a very dear friend in Winston-Salem, he died a few months ago. I went to school with his daughter. This man and his wife seemed to think a great deal of me. When I held meetings in and around Winston Salem, they would come to hear me quite often. In fact, nearly every revival that I held for many years, around Winston-Salem, this man and his wife would come. He was a member of the church, but he wasn't a Christian. He drank and used profanity and ran after other men's wives. He wouldn't even pretend to be Christian. He was a church member, but he did not pretend to be a Christian. One night he came to hear me preach. I preached a rather searching, digging message, and he came up to me after this service, and took hold of my hand and said, "John, don't be so hard on us poor old reprobates." He said, "Ease up just a little. Can't you give us a little comfort?" I stood there, and held his hand, and with tears in my eyes and an ache in my heart, I said to him, "George, I love you; I appreciate you and your wife coming to hear me preach. I've always had a very warm spot in my heart for you. But," I said, "George, you are lost, and if

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you don't repent of your sins, and get right with God, you are going to hell." I said, "God has called me to preach, and if I stood in the pulpit and cried peace, peace, when there was no peace, and lulled you to sleep in your sins, and let you die in your sins thinking that some way you were going to get through to heaven, "I would be a traitor to you and a traitor to God, and a traitor to my calling."

This thing of preaching the gospel isn't fun sometimes. It isn't a pleasant thing to stand up, and wield the sword of God's Spirit and cut into the very quick of people's souls, but it is a responsibility that God has placed upon me as a minister of the gospel. I have my mind made up that when I stand before the judgment bar of God, I'm not going to have the blood of any other person on my hands. God has set me as a watchman upon the wall to cry out and warn when danger cometh. I stand here today as the servant of Almighty God, and say to you, from the authority of this book, and upon the authority of the word of the Son of God, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish, and except ye be converted and become as a little child, ye can in nowise enter the kingdom of heaven." And, unless you have repented of yours sins and have been covered by the blood, and you are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, you will be banished from his presence into outer darkness and eternal despair. Whether you believe that

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isn't my responsibility, it is my responsibility to tell *you* what God's word says. It's your responsibility to accept it, and believe it, and act upon it, or reject it and be lost.

### THE KING WAS JUSTIFIED IN REJECTING HIM

Really, I can see why this king took the attitude that he did toward this man. He had a perfect right to take that kind of attitude. This king had gone to great trouble and expense to prepare this banquet. It was to be a banquet in honor of his son. He had gone to great expense to purchase these garments; and now, for this man to just deliberately walk in, and refuse to wear the wedding garment, and to presume to come into the presence of the king without the wedding garment on, was an insult to the king. It was an insult to his son. The man was taking the attitude, I don't care a thing about the king; I don't care anything about his son; I'll dress as I please; I'll do what I want.

Friends, I think I know the kind of character that Jesus was depicting in this part of the parable. You can find thousands of them all around you today. I can picture this man as he came in the door, and the servants meet him at the door and say; "We are glad you came. The king will be delighted with your presence, and I have your wedding garment for you. I'll take that one and lay it over here. You may put on this wedding garment and go into the presence of the king, and enjoy his fellowship." But the man draws

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himself up very haughtily, and says, "Oh, thank you, that's very nice of you and that's very generous of the king, but really I don't think I need your garment. You know I just purchased this garment recently, and I have just worn it today; it was fresh when I put it on this morning, and I have been very careful about my contacts; I have not been to the market place, or anywhere like that. Really, I don't think I need your garment. You may keep that for some of these other dirty, grimy wretches that will be coming in later in rags and tatters. They'll need it, but really, I don't need it. You see, I'm all right as I am." The servant says, "But sir, the king has specified that each guest shall wear this particular garment, and if you go into the presence of the king without this garment on, he will be indignant, and he will banish you from his presence. I beg you not to do it." And the man draws himself up very haughtily and says, "Do you mean to insinuate that I am not fit to go into the presence of the king? Why, I'll have you to understand, that I come from one of the best families of Jerusalem. I am a Jew of the strictest sense, and I'll have you understand that I am respected by everybody in my community. They look upon me as an outstanding, honorable citizen, and now you imply that I am not fit to stand in the presence of the king. Why, sir, that is an insult to me."

“But the servant says, "Sir, it isn't a question of who you are, nor where you came from, nor whatever

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people may think about you. This is the king's business, and the king is involved, and his son is involved. And he has specified that every guest shall wear this garment and I warn you, sir, don't go into his presence without this garment on." The man says, "Ah, tut, tut, don't try to pull that old bigoted, narrowminded stuff on me. You must not be a college graduate. Why that's old-fashioned fageyism. I am a Ph.D and I'm broad-minded. In fact, I've studied all religions, and you know all of them have their good points. And there are many paths that lead to God."

Friends, that isn't true. There are many paths that lead to a *belief in God*. You can study geology, or astronomy, or any other of the great branches of science and become convinced of the reality of God. But, there is a difference between *believing in God* and *having fellowship with God*. There are a lot of people who are going to hell on that kind of philosophy. "Oh, I believe if man does the best he can, if he lives a good clean moral life, that will be all right." No, it won't be, friends. God hasn't left it up to us to provide our own wedding garment. If he had, then when we wore our best that would be all he could require of us, but Gad hasn't put our salvation on that basis. God went to great trouble and expense at the sacrifice of his own Son. He has made an atonement upon Calvary for the salvation of your soul, so that you can be washed from your guilt, and be born again and receive a new nature, and be made

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fit to stand in the presence of the king. And for you to assume that you can overlook the great provision, the great sacrifice of God, to presume that you can choose your own way, and do as you please, is an insult to Almighty God; and, it is a reflection upon the Son of God, who hung upon Calvary, and died, in order to redeem you from your sin. God would be untrue to his very nature, and untrue to the sacrifice of his Son, if he admitted anyone into his presence who had despised, and spurned, and rejected that sacrifice. I say to you today, there is only one way, and that is the way of the cross, the way of the fountain filled with blood.

Some years ago the Atheistic Society of America got out a pamphlet. It was supposed to be a strong indictment against the Christian religion. In this pamphlet it gave caricature pictures of some of the great Old Testament characters. They gave one of Noah, one of Abraham, one of Jacob, one of Moses and one of David. And underneath each picture, they gave a full, lurid, detailed account of the sins these men had committed, according to the scriptural records. They told of how Noah got drunk, how his sons had to go in and cover him to hide his nakedness. They told of how Abraham practiced a lie with reference to his relationship to Sara, and how he took his handmaiden and brought a child into this world out of God's plan and contrary to God's purpose. It told about Jacob, how he cheated his brother out of his birthright; then lied to his father

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in order to get the blessing, and how he cheated and defrauded his father-in-law, Laban. They told about how Moses committed murder - killing an Egyptian and burying him in the sand. They told about David committing adultery with Bathsheba; then plotted and schemed to have Uriah killed to get him out of the way, so that David could marry Bathsheba. And, after they had given a full, lurid detailed account of these men's sins; they said in large blackface type: The Christian's Bible says these men are friends of God. What kind of a God is it that has such friends as that? Now, that was supposed to be a strong indictment against the Christian religion.

But Friends, I want to say to you that those atheists had a perfect right to raise that question. They had a perfect right to make the insinuation. If God is holy, if God is the kind of God this universe ought to have, he doesn't have any business consorting with, and being on friendly terms with drunkards, and liars, and cheaters, and murderers, and adulterers. In fact, if they had known me, and known about my sins they could have put my picture in there, and told about my sins, and included me in that group, too. And, if they had known you and known about your sins, they could have put your picture in there, and told about your sins. There isn't a person here this morning who would be willing to have a preacher or God take a blackboard up here and make an itemized account of the sins that you have committed. Look into your own heart, call to

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remembrance the life you have lived. Think of all the things you have done. The only place where those atheists missed it was this: they overlooked *the* fact that the Bible not only teaches that God is holy, and that God is light, but the Bible teaches that God is love. God not only hates sin, but he loves the sinner. God in his infinite mercy has devised a plan, and found a way, whereby he can save men from sin, and wash them and make them fit for fellowship with himself. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ, God's own Son, took our place and died in our stead, and made it possible for us to be washed and redeemed, brought out of darkness into light, out from under the power of Satan into the kingdom of God.

"There is a fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Emmanuel's veins; And sinners plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains." There was *the grace* of God that brings salvation. But friends, if it were not for the grace of God, I'd be lost, and you would be lost. There isn't any other way for us to be made fit to stand in the presence of God, except to have our sins forgiven and be born again. You were born with a nature in you that makes you unfit for fellowship with God. It is only as that nature is changed by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit are you fit for fellowship with God.

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Our heavenly Father, thou hast given to us the privilege, not only the privilege, but the awful responsi-

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bility, of preaching the word. It carries with it a terrific responsibility. We have been honored and been given many privileges, and we are going to have to stand before thy judgement throne one day and answer to thee for our ministry. Thou hast given us the privilege of coming to this Church, and thou hast brought this great congregation of boys and girls, men and women, out to this service this morning. Some of them have not been here this week, some of them may not be here next week, some of them may be dead before Sunday. They are headed toward the judgment, and we have to be true to the conviction and the message that thou didst lay upon our heart. But, Father, we remember that Jesus in his parable of the sower, tells of how the seed falls on hard ground sometimes, and the birds carry it away and the people are lost. And, no doubt there will be people who will go out of this service today and shrug this off, and laugh and scoff and forget it. But, oh God, may thy Holy Spirit take this truth and indict it to the hearts and minds of people. For only the Holy Spirit can produce conviction for sin. We can preach the word, but the Holy Spirit must take it and illumine it, and indict until it will produce conviction. And, we pray that Thy Holy Spirit may take this truth and seal it to all our hearts. It's so easy for us to try to fool ourselves, but Lord we don't want to be fooled. We don't want to be deceived. We want to know the truth. We want to know the requirements that God makes of us

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before it is too late. And, now may this truth be indicted to the hearts and minds of these children, and these older people, and may these parents realize that their children are more than animals to be fed, more than intellectual creatures to be educated. May they realize that their children are immortal souls, and may they not get so busy looking after the physical and intellectual well being of their children that they will forget their souls. For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, and what shall it profit a man and woman if they gain the whole world and lose their boys and girls. Take this truth and seal it to our hearts, for Christ's sake. Now may the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the communion, the blessed fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you and abide with you, now and forever, Amen.