

God's Invitations

by

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GOD'S INVITATIONS ARE CALLS TO REPENTANCE

Have you given much thought to the repeated invitations recorded in the Bible in which God invites man to come to Him? Even a casual survey will impress one with the surprising number of invitations God has extended to man. They are sometimes called by the title "invitation" and sometimes by the title "calling." They are the same, by whatever title they are named. They are expressions of divine grace as a holy God invites sinful men to come and meet Him in peace and fellowship.

Here are typical invitations which God extended to sinners. *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1: 18). "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:22). "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye 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 on him; and to our God, for*

he will abundantly pardon" Isa. 55:1, 6, 7). Jesus added His personal invitations to those recorded elsewhere in Scripture, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). Those are but typical of the scores of invitations from God which are extended to man in the Bible; the list could be continued almost indefinitely. That is enough to impress you with the realization that you are the personal recipient of God's invitation to divine fellowship. You are one of the called of God. God's invitation to a sinner is in reality a call to him to repent. Remember that "repent" means "turn, change." God's invitation is an appeal to the sinner to turn from his own way and return to the Lord. It is, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, an invitation for the sinner to forsake his wicked way and his unrighteous thoughts, and to return to the Lord for mercy and pardon (Isa. 55:6, 7). That is what repentance means.

God's call to the wayward is like that call He extended to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord" (Jer. 3:12, 13, 14). God's call for sinners to repent is based on His mercy and His desire to forgive, cleanse, and reclaim.

The prophet Hosea had a tragic experience in his marriage which helped him to understand the love and mercy and forgiveness of God. His wife Gomer turned her affection from him and set it on other lovers. Finally, she deserted her husband and children and became a public prostitute. When she was reduced to destitution, she was brought to the slave market to be sold as a servant to any one who would buy her. Upon God's instruction, Hosea went to the slave market and purchased her as his own. He took her back home and after a period of cleansing restored her to her place in the family. That tragic experience taught the prophet how God loves and yearns after and is ready to forgive sinners. Hosea made this application of the lesson he had learned: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord- say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously" (Hosea 14:1, 2). In response to such confession and entreaty, God promised to respond, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (Hosea 14:4). Such a promise, accompanied as it is by such urgent invitation to return, should awaken the spirit of repentance in the heart of every sinner. How does a person return to the Lord after going astray in sin? The prophet Joel explains in these words, "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:12, 13). God is not concerned with the rituals of religion as He is with the spirit of repentance, (1) Let a person be sincere, turning to God with all his heart. (2) Let a person be sorry, weeping and mourning over his sin. (3) Let a person be spiritual, rending his heart and not his garments. (4) Let a person be believing, that God will show mercy and grace and kindness by forgiving sin and cleansing the sinner. That is how any person and every person can come to the Lord God.

The Bible is replete with examples of a person or group of persons returning to God for forgiveness. The people of Nineveh heard the preaching of Jonah that in forty days their city would be destroyed because of its wickedness. They believed God. They proclaimed a fast. They turned from their evil ways. They cried out to God. God saw their response and spared them from the judgment which He had announced would come upon them. That is a case of a people spared from judgment because they repented and sought the Lord.

The publican of whom Jesus spoke turned from the evil that had marked his life and cried out, "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" (Luke 18:13). Jesus said that man went home justified because of his response to God's conviction of sin.

King Josiah of Judah understood by the reading of the Word of God how seriously his nation had departed from God. He led a revival in which evil was put out of the land, spiritual worship was enjoined, and people sought the Lord with all their hearts. The nation was given longer life as a result. It is as the Bible says, "*Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation*" (11 Cor. 7: 10). It has ever been so. It is so today.

God's invitations are calls for sinners to turn from their wicked ways, to change their course. Response to His invitations necessitates true repentance. It would be serious that any person would ever miss the way of God, but to reject God's invitations to walk in that way is especially tragic. Do not make that mistake. God now commands all men every where to repent, and that includes you (Acts 17:30).

Do you hear the call of God upon your life? Are you aware that He is inviting you to a closer walk with Him? If so, respond immediately. The best possible thing that could happen to you is for the will of God to be done perfectly in your life. The worse thing that could happen would be for you to miss that divine will. God's invitations are still going forth to people like you and me. "*Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*" (Heb. 4:7).

The invitation of God is His call to repentance.

God's Invitations Offer Life For Death

The gracious invitations of God, so oft repeated in the Bible, are calls for people to come out of spiritual death and receive the free gift of spiritual life. The invitations are sometimes left unheeded because people do not know what is involved in such an act of grace. What is "life" and what is "death" as they relate to the gracious invitations of God to sinners?

The Bible concept of death is not annihilation but separation. You see that idea expressed in the words of the father when the prodigal son came back home. He said, "*This my son was dead, but is alive again; he was lost, and is found*" (Luke 15:24). Now, the lad was not truly dead. He was very much alive all the while. But during his riotous living in the foreign country he was so separated spiritually and geographically from his father that the father could say, "It is as if he was dead." Separation is the point of emphasis in the term death. Physical death simply means the spirit is separated from the body. It is not the ceasing of existence nor soul-sleeping. It is separation. Spiritual death is the same: the separation of the spirit of man from God, the Source of all life. That is why the Bible speaks of the sinner being "*dead in sins*" while he is very much alive in the body. It means because of his sins he is separated from God.

Since death means separation, life means union. That is the idea expressed by the father of the prodigal son. When the boy was back home, joined to his father geographically and spiritually, the father could say, "He is alive again." He meant, "My boy is with me, sharing my life again." That is the basic idea in the Biblical term "eternal life." Eternal life is not a thing that God

presents to believers apart from himself. It is a vital and dynamic union between the believer and his God. Jesus explained it that way when He said, "*This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*" (John 17:3). The essence of spiritual, eternal life is union with God in Jesus.

In view of those definitions, are you spiritually alive or spiritually dead? The invitations of God are appeals that every one who is spiritually dead by separation from God receive spiritual life by coming to Him in repentance and faith. "*As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die*" (Ezek. 33: 11).

There is a grave danger in sin. It is the danger of spiritual death and eternal judgment. God warns, "*The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off*" (Psa. 37:38). There is a "*mist of darkness*" reserved forever for those who are impenitent and who do not respond to the invitations of God (II Pet. 2:17). Like the ground which brings forth no helpful crops, but only thorns and briars, their "*end is to be burned*" (Heb. 6:8). That burning will take place "*in the lake of fire which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*" (Rev. 21:8).

Here is how God pictures the end of the course of sin and the destiny of the persons who reject His invitations to forgiveness in Jesus Christ. The Apostle John wrote, "*And I saw a great white throne, and let him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire*" (Rev. 20:11-15). What a tragic fate awaits the impenitent sinner!

Someone might object, "But a God of love would not send a person to hell, would He?" Ah, that is what the Christian gospel is all about. It reports that every person who has reached the age of spiritual responsibility has sinned and deserves to be condemned. It declares further that God does not wish the death of any person, but would prefer that all come to Christ for salvation. It tells how God has effected a way of salvation which is so easy and available that any person can be saved by turning from sin and trusting Jesus Christ as personal Savior. It warns that any person rejecting that way will consign himself to destruction because he purposefully and personally rejects the way of salvation. No, God does not "send" people to hell. Those who hear and respond to His invitations will escape the terror of eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord.

How can we be sure that God, all powerful as He is, really wants sinners to be saved? Examine the testimony of God recorded for our assurance in Holy Scripture. He calls, "*Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*" (Ezek. 18:30-32). Again, He testifies, "*As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die*" (Ezek. 33: 11). The New Testament scriptures bear the same testimony that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). The clear statements of God testify that He prefers to

save than to destroy, to forgive than to condemn.

The greatest evidence of God's concern for the salvation of sinners is the gift of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as the Savior of sinners. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:9, 10). Think of it! What an *"unspeakable gift"* God gave when He sent Jesus the sinless One to die for sinners, the guilty ones. There is no need for further proof.

God's invitations are calls to sinners to turn from their wicked ways, which end in eternal death, and to receive life eternal by personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. There are no other alternatives available.

I remember that day when, as a lad eleven years of age, I turned from my sin to the Saviour and received His forgiveness. I have never regretted that decision a single day since then. Over the years, I have talked with scores and scores of believing Christians. They have testified one after another of the joy and peace they received through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ. Never have I found one who regretted that he had come to Christ. Neither will you. It will be the best decision you ever make when you decide to receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days" (Deut. 30:19, 20).

God's Invitations Are Attended By Gracious Promises

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory 'and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Pet. 1:2-4).

Did you catch the reference to the *"exceeding great and precious"*

promises"? A study of the invitations of God to men must include a review of some of those precious promises which He makes to those who accept His invitation. Let us look at some of the great things promised to any one and every one who accepts God's invitation of grace.

I. God promises cleansing to any one who accepts His invitation to come. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1: 18). How serious would a sin be for it to be compared to scarlet and to crimson? It must be very serious, indeed. But God promises such cleansing that even sins so serious as that will become white as snow.

The New Testament describes that cleansing as *"the washing of regeneration"* (Tit. 3:5). That raises the question as to what is able to wash away sin and remove its stain? The answer is found in Rev. 1: 5. Jesus Christ has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. Is it really possible? Yes, it is! John saw some in heaven who were identified as having *"washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (Rev. 7:14).

So we Christians sing, "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow! No other fount I know; nothing but the blood of Jesus."

II. Gracious reception is promised to any one who accepts God's invitation to come to Him. His invitations are not attended by threats, but by promises. One who responds to His invitation will not be received with rebuke, but with grace and loving welcome.

Do you remember the reception the loving father gave his prodigal son? The boy was ready to humiliate himself with confession of sins and ask for the place of a servant in the household. The father was not wanting the humiliation of his child; he was concerned about his restoration instead. So the young man's confession was smothered with hugs and kisses of welcome by the father. Jesus said that is the kind of reception God gives the sinner.

Every gift of good is given without rebuke attached. The sinner who comes will never be rebuked for waiting too long, nor for going too far, nor for coming in the wrong way. He will be welcomed in grace. Jesus said, "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37). His promise is very strong. "I will never turn away, I certainly will not cast out, the one who comes," He has promised. You can rest secure in the word of Jesus.

If we were received on the basis of our merit, some of us may not get a favorable reception. But we are received on the basis of our need (and each of us has plenty of that!) and on the basis of the merit of Jesus Christ (and He has more than enough for us all). Therefore, we can come confident of a gracious reception.

111. Genuine fellowship is promised to any one and every one who accepts God's invitation of grace. Jesus said it this way, "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*" (Rev. 3:20). It is a gracious promise, but it becomes the more meaningful in view of the custom which lay behind it when the Lord Jesus spoke those words.

Eating together was a common sign of covenant, friendship, and peace. Enemies did not eat and drink together. To break bread with a person was to indicate a very strong bond united you and him. That meaning attached itself to the promised Jesus made of "supping" (feasting) with Him and He with us.

To come to God in Jesus Christ, even as a guilty sinner, means to enter into His fellowship. (Of course, cleansing from sin takes place before the fellowship is enjoyed.) God calls men into "*the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*" (I Cor. 1:9). The fellowship Christians enjoy with one another is but a reflection and result of the fellowship each one shares with Christ. The apostle John wrote, "*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*" (I John 1: 3). To be saved means to enter into that heavenly fellowship with God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and all those who are saved.

IV. Abiding rest and peace is promised any one who comes to God for forgiveness of sins. I am comforted by the very reading of the promise of the Lord Jesus: "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*" (Matt. 11: 18-20). Isn't that beautiful?

In contrast with the promise of abiding rest and peace is the statement of God concerning the wicked. "*The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*" Isa . 57:20, 21). Contrast the verdict of God, "There is no peace to the wicked" with the promise of Jesus, "*I will give you rest.*" That is the promise attached to the invitation of grace which God extends to sinners.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"

(Rom. 5: 1). *"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"*(Phil. 4:7). It is, indeed, *"sweet peace, the gift of God's love."*

V. Abundant life is offered to every one who comes to God in response to His invitation. Listen to God's call through His prophet Amos, *"Seek ye me, and ye shall live Seek ye the Lord, and ye shall live See good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you"* (Amos 5:4,6,14). What is the meaning of the "life" that is promised?

The Bible speaks of life on three planes. (1) There is physical life, which is the breath of God breathed into the body of man - Gen. 2:7. (2) There is eternal life, which is the personal relationship of God through faith in Jesus Christ John 17:3. (3) There is abundant life, which is the fullness of God communicated to the committed Christian by the Holy Spirit - John 10: 10. It is the eternal life and the abundant life which is provided for the Christian by response to God's invitations.

Salvation brings eternal life and sanctification brings abundant and victorious life. Both are yours in Christ. Knowing the truth of it, enter into the good of it by repentance and faith.

Would you like to respond to God's invitation right now? He promises to cleanse you from all sin, to receive you graciously and in love, to accept you into His personal fellowship, to give you abiding rest and peace, and to bless you with eternal and abundant life. It is yours for the taking. Receive those *"exceeding great and precious promises"* without delay.

God's Invitations Are Based On The Meditation Of Jesus

God welcomes the sinner, saying, "Come." The sinner draws back, aware of his sin, and says, *"How can I come since I am so unworthy?"* God replies, "Come through Jesus my Son, and be cleansed and made anew in your coming."

Therein lies a blessed truth. God's invitations to the sinner are based not on personal merit but upon the authority which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has before the Father. Therefore, the sinner is as welcome to come as is God's only begotten Son. It is amazing, but it is true.

The First Epistle of John is written to assure the faith of believers that they truly belong to God. To know by personal experience is the key theme of that epistle. John writes in the latter part of chapter one and the first part of chapter two concerning the three great steps involved in salvation. (1) There is confession of sin on the part of the sinner: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (I John 1:9). (2) Confession is followed by the help of Jesus: *"We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (2:1). (3) Forgiveness is received because of Jesus' shed blood: *"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* (2:2). Do you see how Jesus is related to assurance? Believers belong to God because Jesus intercedes for them as their Advocate and cleanses them by His blood as their propitiation. Yes, the mediation of Jesus makes us sure of salvation. Therefore, John draws his epistle to a conclusion with these words, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God"* (I John 5:13).

Assurance of salvation is bound up in the person of Jesus. Acceptance before God is dependent on the person of Jesus. Forgiveness of sins is received by the sacrifice presented by Jesus. No one can come to God except through the intercession of Jesus. That is why we say the invitations of God to sinners are based on the mediation of Jesus.

The mediation of Jesus begins with His sacrifice for sinners. The Bible repeatedly states that

Christ died "for" sinners. "*In due time Christ died for the ungodly while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Rom. 5:6, 8). To say He died "for" sinners means He died "in their stead, in their place."

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" II Pet. 2:24). "*Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*" Isa. 53:4-6).

That is what is called "substitutionary atonement" or "vicarious suffering." It means that someone took our place and suffered in our stead. That he effected a covering of our sins so that we might not have to face their guilt and penalty. That some One, of course, was Jesus. He did not die on the cross because He was a guilty sinner deserving death. On the contrary, he "*did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*" (I Pet. 2:22). Yet He suffered as if He were personally guilty and deserving of death. What is the explanation of it? "*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*" (I Pet. 3:18). "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made righteousness of God in him*" (II Cor. 5:21). There is no way any sinner can come to God except through the benefits of the vicarious atonement of Jesus.

But Jesus has made it possible for a guilty sinner to come before God as a redeemed saint. As unbelievable as it sounds, it is true. We now have "*boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*" (Heb. 10: 19, 20). Coming through Jesus Christ, the sinner is cleansed and made a new creation. He does not approach God as the person that he was, but as a new person created anew in Christ Jesus. God accepts him because of what Jesus has done.

Ephesians 1:7 reads, "*In whom (that is, in Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*" Where is the redemption? It is in Christ. Where is the person who has repented of sin and placed personal faith in Jesus as his own Savior? He is in Christ. The believer is where the redemption is. He is secure.

How is the sinner's release secured? It is secured through the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, the innocent Son of God. What good comes in that release? The full and generous and final forgiveness of every sin is secured because God's grace is free to those who come to Him in Christ.

Now, hear this word from the lips of Jesus. "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6). His words are so emphatic there can be no misunderstanding of His meaning. To say He is "*the way*" means He is the only way. To say He is "*the truth*" means what He is and says and does is the ultimate expression of truth. To say He is "*the life*" means there is no life apart from that which He gives. That means there is no knowing God, nor the truth about God, nor the life of God, apart from the mediation of Jesus Christ.

What about praying through the help of angels, saints, or the virgin Mary? It is useless, for they offer no help in prayer. Consider I Tim. 2:5, "*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*" How many Gods are there? There is only one. How many mediators are there? There is only one. Who is the one God? He is the Lord God of heaven who is revealed in the Christian scriptures. Who is the one mediator? He is Jesus Christ the only

begotten Son of God and the Savior of those who believe. He alone goes between the believer and God. There is none other. There need be no other. Jesus is enough.

Jesus is the mediator for all who come, regardless of their race, nationality, generation, age, guilt, or any other distinction. Those who are afar off and those who are near come alike to God through Jesus. *"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father"* (Eph. 2:18). God does not have one way for Jews to be saved and another way for Gentiles to be saved. There is only one way of salvation and that is through Jesus Christ. To attempt to approach God any other way is to miss salvation.

Why would God accept a person who comes by another way? God spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all as our sacrifice for sin. He who would try to come another way rejects God's provision and blasphemes Jesus' sacrifice. Such a one will never be accepted before God.

On the other hand, there is no need to come through any other. Jesus is the sufficient Savior. We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all *"this man, after he had offered one sacrifice" for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God "for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"* (Heb. 10: 10, 12,14).

He who comes to God with faith in Jesus Christ has the witness in himself that Jesus is enough. All the invitations of God are based upon the mediation of Jesus. Don't pass Him by. Jesus alone can effect salvation for you.

God's Invitations Are Extended To "Whosoever Will"

One of our great Christian hymns proclaims, "Whosoever heareth, shout, shout the sound; send the blessed tidings all the world around. Tell the joyful news wherever man is found: Whosoever will may come." The hymn is not the unfounded wish of some enthusiastic person; it is founded in clear Bible teaching. The offer of salvation from sin through Jesus Christ is extended over all the earth to every generation of mankind, "Whosoever will may come!" A study of God's invitations must include this blessed truth: God's invitations are extended to *"whosoever will!"*

1. We know that God invites *"whosoever will"* because of the scope of Jesus' sacrifice. Logic convinces us that Jesus would die for no one whom God would not call to salvation or whom God was unwilling to save. For whom, then, did Jesus die? The apostle John wrote, *"He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* (1 John 2:2).

Examine that statement. *"Propitiation"* means to make the atoning sacrifice. Jesus offered the sacrifice which effects forgiveness of sins and the free gift of salvation. For whom? John said it was for *"our sins."* The "our" might mean the Jews, or those who were already saved, or some who might be designated the "elect" of God. Even so, that was not the limit of Christ's atoning sacrifice. "The whole world" - the rest of the world - was included in His redemptive deed. Christ died for the whole world of mankind.

Hebrews 2:9 *adds this word, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."* Do you hear it? Jesus tasted the bitterness of death for every human being. There is not one exception. Jesus died for you, each member of your family, every person you know, and all those whom you will never know. He died for every person living in the generation of His ministry on earth, all who lived in each generation before then, and all who have or will live in the generations since His sacrifice. God's invitation extends no further than Jesus'

sacrifice. But since Jesus died for every person of all the human race, God's invitation is extended to "*whosoever will*."

II. We know that God invites "*whosoever will*" because of the scope of the Great Commission. It is interesting how inclusive the commission is, and yet how personal it is. Matthew 24:14 includes "*all the world*." Matthew 28:19 and Luke 24:47 specifies "*all nations*." Acts 1:8 is more specific to mention particular provinces and local cities. Mark 16:15 requires the gospel to be preached to every person. That means each individual in every city of every province of each nation in the world is to hear the gospel.

Why was God so inclusive as to embrace the whole world and yet so specific as to specify each individual? The reason must be because He makes the offer of salvation to each person in every generation of human existence. That is a "*whosoever will*" invitation which includes you.

III. We know that God invites "*whosoever will*" because of the scope of His love. Whom does God love? God loves "*the world*." Jesus himself said so: "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved*" (John 3:16, 17). "*The world*" does not mean water and land, animals and fish. It means "the world of mankind." God is concerned with saving men. He sent His only begotten Son into the world of mankind that "*whosoever will*" of the human race could be saved. If you ever see a person whom God does not love, then salvation is impossible for him. But the truth is, you will never see a person whom God does not love. Therefore, you will never see a person whom God has excluded from the offer of forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ.

IV. We know that God invites "*whosoever will*" because of His expressed desire. What is God's desire concerning poor lost sinners? He is "*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (II Pet. 3:9). He "*will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*" (I Tim. 2:4). He has declared, "*As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*" (Ezek. 33:11). There need be no argument. The clear statements of Holy Scripture are sufficient. God's expressed and repeated desire is that every person hear the gospel and be saved. Yet, God has limited himself to the response of man's will. Therefore, He invites "*whosoever will*" to come and graciously receives those who respond.

V. We know that God invites "*whosoever will*" because of the prophetic witness. Without reference to specific teaching in the Old Testament, Peter summarizes the content of the prophetic message in these words concerning their witness of Jesus: "*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*" (Acts 10:43). The prophet of the New Testament took up that same message, declaring, "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*" (II Cor. 5:19, 20). Who is reconciled to God by the death of his Son? "*The world*." To whom is the invitation, "*be ye reconciled to God*," extended? To "*the world*." Who receives remission of sins? "*Whosoever believeth in him*." The invitation is universal. The door is open to any one who will come.

VI. We know that God invites "*whosoever will*" because of the promises He has made to those who come. The sinful receives cleansing (Isa. 1: 18). The weary receive rest (Matt. 11: 28). The hungry and thirsty receive supply (Isa. 55: 1; John 7:37, 38). The lonely and deserted receive fellowship (Rev. 3:20). You see, there is provision for every person of every kind of need. God

makes no distinction on the basis of race, nationality, culture, need, nor even kind of sin. His invitations are extended to every person. Those who hear and respond receive salvation and all the blessings that attend being a child of God.