

# 1 - THE INVITATION OF CHRIST

by  
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In view of the fact that all have sinned, Christ died for us, commanded that the good news be preached to every creature, and issued a universal invitation to all men to come to Him for salvation from sin. "Come unto me, all ye that labor 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" (Matthew 11:28,29). This invitation is one of the best known and least heeded passage in the Scriptures. No overture has ever been extended to man that was more wonderful or more important than this. It is the great invitation.

First, it is from Jesus Christ, the Son of God of whom we read, "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). This fact alone makes it the greatest invitation as it comes from the highest name in heaven unto lowly sinful men.

Second, it is the great invitation because it results in salvation. There are many invitations you may receive, but this is the greatest. It will exalt you, and give rest unto your soul. The great invitation brings a light burden. Why did Jesus give this invitation? There are several reasons but all are related and tied to the fact that...

## **GOD AND MAN ARE SEPARATED.**

Jesus begins by telling men to "come." God and the sinner are separated, but God desires man's fellowship. There would be no invitation without some separation. God desires man's reconciliation. The separation of man from God was caused by the sin of man. "And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works" (Col. 1:21). In sinning, man left God by his own will. If man is to be reconciled to God, he must be willing to accept the invitation. The sinner is alienated from God and is opposed to God.

The Bible teaches that man must be reconciled to God. It is man who has gone away in disbelief, rebellion, and disobedience. Man must come back in faith and submission. The invitation is to "all ye." All have need of salvation. Provision has been made for all, and the gospel is to be preached to all. All are free to come. All are under obligation to answer the invitation either by accepting it or rejecting it.

If we are to be at peace with God, there must be a reconciliation and forgiveness of our sins by God. Forgiveness takes place in heaven when man complies with God's will on earth. Accepting this invitation will reconcile one to God. This is why the invitation was given. If we come to Christ, we will be forgiven. "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ" (II Cor. 5:18).

The rest promised is "unto your souls." This is a rest that no one can buy or earn, but anyone can find it if he will come to Christ in trusting obedience. This rest is the peace of a soul in harmony with itself and with its Creator; one which has found its true purpose and place in life. Rest of the soul is one of the many priceless blessings enjoyed by the servant of Christ in the present life (Phil. 4:7). It is only through the blood of Christ that we are reconciled to God (Col. 1:19-22). Christ invites us.

Sin has made reconciliation necessary; Christ has made it possible by His death. We are all reconciled by the blood in the one body (Eph. 2:16). This one body is the church for which Christ died. There are no reconciled people outside the church for which Christ died as His blood bought the church.

## **CLEARLY CHRIST IS WILLING TO SAVE SINNERS.**

Some people express the idea that God is not interested in them or that He doesn't want them. This is manifestly false. If no sparrow falls without the Father's notice, He is concerned with you. Others speak as if God were a tyrant who desires to condemn men. One verse erases such ideas. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). God wants us to be saved, but there are conditions we must be willing to meet. "The Lord ...is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). Repentance, a changing of our mind, will cause us to accept the invitation with its yoke and burden. The only limitation on the "all ye" is that those burdened with sin must earnestly desire to be free from it. Only those who are convicted of sin, weary of its bondage, and penitent of the guilt of it can receive the blessings of

Christ (Acts 2:37,38). No mere outward coming will suffice. One must truly hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Some people question the power of the sinner to come to Christ. If "what will be, will be" then man is not responsible, and has no power over his life. The invitation tells us that man does have the power to respond to the invitation. Man is free and not predestined to be something. He can accept the invitation if he so wills. If not, Christ's words are a painful hoax. The "come" not only implies that man must come, but also that he is able to do so. God's grace made it possible. God does not need to be persuaded to save; man is the one who must be persuaded to accept the salvation offered.

Some believe that if God wants you, He will exert some mysterious power over you. This verse teaches otherwise. Accepting the invitation is dependent on our will. It is because man has the power to respond to Christ's invitation that we have commands to teach. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16).

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