

Invitations of the Gospel

by Gilbert Beebe

The gospel is not a message of invitation, but rather a sovereign call to those who are predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, John 5:25, Acts 2:39, Romans 8:29, Galatians 3:2

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "Gospel Invitation"

Description

Gilbert Beebe addresses the debate among brethren regarding whether the invitations of the gospel are for sinners or only for the children of God. He argues that there are no invitations in the law or gospel, as God's commands are authoritative and not optional requests. Beebe emphasizes that those who are called by grace are the chosen people of God, predestined for salvation in Christ, and that the invitations in the Bible are expressions of divine authority, not mere requests. He urges believers to align their interpretations with the plain declarations of Scripture and the Spirit of the Lord.

Transcript

We have received a communication from the north, over the signature, "A Friend of Truth," desiring our views in regard to what are called the invitations of the gospel; whether they are addressed indiscriminately to sinners or exclusively to the quickened children of God. We learn from the letter that some of our esteemed brethren are differing seriously on the subject. Such passages as Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," etc. "Many are called, but few are chosen." The marriage of the king's son: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Also the first and eighth of Proverbs. Some brethren take the position that these are invitations to sinners indiscriminately, and others contend that these are invitations addressed only to the children of God.

In giving our views we beg leave to differ, very respectfully, however, from both parties. We deny that there are any invitations, either in the law or gospel, to saints or sinners. We think that a little reflection on the subject will satisfy all honest inquirers after truth that it would be altogether incompatible with the eternal perfections of Jehovah to issue invitations to any of His creatures.

First: We will remark that none of the communications from God to men are anywhere in the Bible called invitations, and it is therefore speculative and idle to argue theologically a position or question which has no scriptural foundation, and therefore, like the endless genealogies and questions about the law, which the apostle warns us against, is only calculated to gender strife, but cannot edify or comfort the family of

God.

Second: An invitation is a complimentary request or message from a party having, and claiming to have, no authority to enforce the request, or message, which concedes to the party invited the undisputed right to respectfully decline the invitation, leaving it entirely optional with the party invited to accept or decline without transcending his right.

Third: All those who have been brought to a saving knowledge of God will admit that He speaks the word, and it stands fast; He commands and it is done. "Where the word of a king is, there is power," and God is the King eternal, and the word that proceeds from Him shall not return unto Him void of the work whereunto He hath sent it. Even the carnal Jews perceived that our Redeemer spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Should the writer of these remarks receive a card of invitation from the President of these States, or from the Governor of New York, the fact of its being an invitation guarantees the right to accept or decline without involving a wrong or a crime in doing either. But should either the President or Governor, as chief magistrate of the nation or the State, send an authoritative message to any citizen, summoning him to be or appear at any place, that message would be clothed with all the authority and power of the magistrate from whom it issues; but it could not be regarded as an invitation, because it does not concede to the party to whom it is addressed any right to decline or disobey its authority.

Will any of our brethren contend that when the God of heaven peremptorily says to the seed of Israel, "Seek ye my face," that they have a right to disobey or regard it only as a mere invitation? If He says to them, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," does this imply that the people thus addressed have the same right to decline it as an invitation to obey it as a sovereign mandate from the throne of God? Since God has commanded men to look to him for salvation, have they a right to look anywhere else for that salvation? If there be any authority implied in the address it destroys the nature of the invitation. Indeed, we cannot, without detraction from a proper sense of the eternal power and majesty of Jehovah, entertain the preposterous idea that He deals in invitations to any of His creatures in heaven, earth or hell. All His words are big with power and high in authority; He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, and submits nothing to the volition of any of His creature's wills. But in regards to the passages referred to, they bear the impress of His divine authority; they can none of them be disregarded or disobeyed. The passage referred to, Isaiah 45:22 is a sovereign command to the seed of Jacob scattered to the ends of the earth, to look to Him for salvation, because He is God, and beside Him there is no Savior. All who looked anywhere else, or to any other being, or to themselves, for salvation, were not only guilty of disobedience, but also of idolatry.

The passage, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," etc. is sufficiently clear and explicit. It is addressed to all who labor and are heavy laden, and to no others; and whenever and wherever these words are applied by the Holy Spirit to any poor, laboring, heavy laden sinner, that sinner will as surely come to Jesus as it is sure that the dead will rise when the voice of God calls them forth. The dead neither labor nor are they heavy laden, they slumber unconsciously in their graves; and all men are dead in sin, and as destitute of spiritual vitality until they are quickened by the Spirit, as the body of Lazarus was of natural life before Jesus raised him from the grave. But as soon as a sinner is quickened by the Holy Ghost he becomes a laborer, and is burdened with a heavy weight of guilt, and such are called to Jesus and find rest to their souls in bearing His yoke, which is easy, and His burden, which is light. To take the yoke of Jesus is to come under His law, to be baptized in His name and be yoked together in communion

and fellowship with His disciples in all the privileges of the church of God. But are the unregenerated called to be baptized and identify themselves with the church of God? Philip did not so understand it when he said to the Eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." (Acts 8:37) None but believers are called or commanded to be baptized and come under the yoke of Jesus, for they must first be delivered from the yoke of Moses, the yoke of bondage.

In Matthew 20:16, in the conclusion of the parable of the householder and his hired laborers for his vineyard, Jesus used these words, "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." There was murmuring among some of the disciples; the sons of Zebedee desired distinguished places in the kingdom and some said, "We have forsaken all," etc. "What shall we receive?" The parable was to rebuke this selfish principle, and to show not only the right of our Lord to choose from the whole company of His called children whom He pleased, to labor in His vineyard, but also to reward them equally. Those who had labored the most or the longest were amply rewarded, but Jesus chose to make those who had labored least, equal with those who had borne the heat and toil of the day.

Again in Matthew 22:14, the same words are used at the end of the parable of the marriage of the king's son. The application was made to the Jewish nation, which had been called as the carnal or fleshly descendants of Abraham, and under the covenant of works. God, by the prophets, had informed them of the approaching marriage. In the type they were bidden to the marriage, but in the election of grace they were not the chosen people of God. As the apostle Paul explains, "For they are not all Israel. which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Rom. 9:6-8) Although the whole nation of Israel was called in the type, or shadow of good things which were to come, how very few of them were found to be included in the covenant of grace. Esias, also cried concerning Israel, "Though the number of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." (Rom. 9:27) "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election [or the few chosen] hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." (Rom. 11:7)

We have not time nor space to enlarge on these parables, but it is sufficient for us to demonstrate that there are none called by grace but the chosen people of God, whose salvation is fully secured in our Lord Jesus Christ. "For whom He [God] did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified." (Rom. 8:29,30) In this calling none but the predestinated are called, and all who are called are justified and ultimately glorified. They are saved and called with a holy calling, not according to their works, but according to His own [God's own] purpose and grace which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began. (II Tim. 1:9) To prove, therefore, that they are the called according to God's purpose, is to prove that they love God; that all things work together for their own good; that they are predestinated to bear the image of the Son of God; that they are justified and glorified in Christ. The passages, therefore, which speak of many being called, do not, nay, they cannot possibly relate to this holy calling in which Christ, the good shepherd, calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. For in this calling, the dead shall hear His voice, and they that hear shall live. (John 5:25) The promise of God is unto "all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39)

The declaration of Christ to the self-righteous Jews that He had not come to call or save righteous people, but to call sinners to repentance, does not admit of the construction that He had come to call all the sinners of Adam's race to repentance, for millions of them had already left these mortal shores. The Pharisees upbraided him for associating with publicans and sinners, and He told them that this was His

business in the world, to save sinners. The whole did not need a physician, nor did the righteous need one to save and purge them from sin.

The first chapter of Proverbs is also referred to as favoring the doctrine of invitations, etc. But an examination of the Proverbs of Solomon will show that Solomon personifies Wisdom; and Wisdom, we are told, is justified of her children. In a spiritual sense, Christ is the Wisdom of God to His children. He is of God made unto them wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. But wisdom, abstractly considered, is the opposite of folly and madness. As rational beings, we disobey the maxims or proverbs of wisdom when we transgress her dictates; and wisdom will laugh at us in our calamities, into which we foolishly plunge ourselves, and mock us when our fear cometh. The voice of wisdom is loud in her reproofs when we rush heedlessly into trouble. But the wisdom of God is only known to those who are made wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

Brethren should be careful to avoid any interpretation of the Scriptures which will clash with other plain declarations of the inspired word. We may fail to comprehend or understand some portions of the divine testimony, but our ignorance will not justify us in forcing interpretations which must necessarily conflict with the teachings of the word and the Spirit of the Lord. If our views are right, both the word and the Spirit will harmonize with our views, but if we entertain opinions or views which the Scriptures do not so justify, they must be discarded as wrong and pernicious. Now, in conclusion, we will reiterate to our legally inclined brethren of the north the appeal which the great apostle to the Gentiles made to the bewitched Galatians: "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:2,3) Review your own experiences, see if in your own salvation you only accepted an invitation and availed yourself of it to secure your acceptance with God, or were you awakened to a sensibility of your guilt, lost and helpless condition by the irresistible and almighty power of God? Was it left optional with you to decide whether you would live or die, when the arrows of the Almighty you were arrested and arraigned before the bar of eternal justice? Why did you there cry, "Lord, save, I perish?" Why did you not say, "Lord, I will accept thy invitation."

The Preceding writings are from the March 1, 1863 edition of the publication "Signs of the Times" founded and published for over 45 years by Elder Gilbert Beebe.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/gilbert-beebe/invitations-of-the-gospel/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net