

Will We Respond to the Invitation?

by Vernon Helmuth

God is calling us to respond to His invitation, to surrender our lives to Him, and to bear our own cross, so that we can experience His love, forgiveness, and salvation, and have a deeper relationship with Him.

Duration: 1:30:17

Scripture: Luke 14:16

Topics: "Invitation", "Responding to God's Invitation", "Discipleship"

Description

Vernon Helmuth emphasizes the importance of responding to God's invitation, drawing from the parable of the great supper in Luke 14. He highlights how many make excuses to avoid the call of Christ, urging listeners to reflect on their own lives and the excuses that may hinder their relationship with God. Helmuth encourages a deeper commitment to Christ, reminding the congregation that true discipleship requires bearing one's cross and prioritizing God above all else. He calls for a heartfelt response to the invitation of Jesus, who desires to fill His house with those who are willing to come and partake in His blessings.

Transcript

Well, greetings to each one this morning again. It's been a joy to be here already. My heart has been touched, very much encouraged by Brother Philip's message in the beginning here.

And children's lesson, the family sharing, it's been such a blessing this morning. I feel like I would have enough to go home now and meditate upon what I've heard. But I trust that God will have more for us.

And could we just pause for prayer, bow our heads for a moment of prayer. Our loving Heavenly Father, we do pause before you this morning again, realizing, Lord, that our strength is not in us, Father, but it's in the power of the Holy Ghost, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Father, I pray this morning that you would come and stand by your servant, Lord.

Take these trembling lips, Father, this faltering tongue of mine, and would you move it, Lord, direct this, Father. Guide us by your Spirit, Lord. May your name be lifted up this morning once again, Lord, as we look into your word, Father.

Would we see Jesus a little more clearly, Father? Would we understand the truth of your word in a deeper way, Lord? Father, I'm only a simple boy, but Lord, I trust you. Lord, I trust you for your strength, for your power, the Holy Ghost. Lord, we commit this service now to you.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we do welcome the visitors again this morning that are with us.

There's a number of you here. We are grateful that you're here with us. We hope that you can worship the Lord with us and receive a blessing with us.

This morning, I would like to begin with the Gospel of Luke, in chapter 14, for our opening text this morning. The title of the message this morning is, Will You Respond to the Invitation? I grappled around with the title for quite some time and tossed it back and forth. I guess the title doesn't make all that much difference, but I'm just trying to find a title that would fit the message.

Let's begin in chapter 14 of Luke here. We'll start in verse 17. Jesus is speaking here.

He said, And send his servant. We'll start in 16. It says, Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper and bade many.

Verse 17, And sent his servant at suppertime to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it.

I pray thee, have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. I pray thee, have me excused.

And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly.

Go out quickly into all the streets and the lanes and the city and bring hither the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou has commanded, and yet there is room. There's still room for more.

And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. There was an urgency of the hour there. He wanted the house to be full.

Yet there were so many excuses that his house was not being filled up that evening for his supper. Jesus is showing them how we have so many excuses. What are our excuses today? Do we hear the invitation? Will we respond to the invitation this morning? As Philip shared this morning, that His face would shine upon us this morning.

Are we responding to God that His face can shine upon us? Or are we excusing ourselves in, maybe we wouldn't say that all these things that he's mentioned here, but in essence, are we excusing ourselves for not bowing to God? Are we not bowing to the invitation that God has sent to us through His word? Do we make excuses that causes our Lord to be angry with us, grieving the Holy Spirit? I would like to have us just think for me for a moment. Here we have a couple marriages coming up. Kevin and Nathan, they have sent out many invitations to the people for the marriage, or for their wedding day.

They have sent many invitations out. And let's suppose that out of the, we'll just take a number of 400 people, what would happen, how would they feel if they only got 5 responses back? We can't come. We just have too many other things to do.

How would Nathan and Kevin feel? Here Jesus has the supper prepared, the marriage feast is prepared, and the invitation is open, come, come. And we're all excusing ourselves. All these people are excusing

them from coming.

Percentage wise, we know that there are those that are responding, but the Bible tells us there are few, there are only a few that will respond. The majority will have excuses. They've either taken a wife, they bought some land, they're going their own way.

They don't have time for the marriage supper. They're not interested. Can we picture, can we get in our mind this morning the picture of Christ inviting us? And we don't have time.

We have all kinds of excuses. Let's turn to Matthew, just for a quick verse here. In Matthew 9, we know that God did not come for the righteous.

He did not come for the ones that are whole. In verse 12 of chapter 9 he says, But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, He did come for the righteous, but what he's saying here is that he has come to lift up those that are needy. And who's here that doesn't have a need this morning? Who's here this morning that doesn't cry out to God for a deeper walk with him? I believe when we come to the place of that Pharisee, we thank God that we're not like all these other people, and then we have fell by the wayside.

We have fallen from God's grace. Acts 13, there's another verse. Acts 13, verse 46.

It says, Here we have a picture of the Jews. Jesus came to his own people, and they received him not. But Jesus turned to the people that were waiting for him, that were desiring to hear from him.

He couldn't help the Jews because they were whole. They didn't have a problem. They had all these outward things they had in place.

But God would not allow us to go that way. I'm very grateful to be here with you. I'm grateful for what God has done in our midst.

I'm very grateful for the light that he has shown us. And yet, that God forbid that we would settle down and think we have arrived. I don't think that's any of our hearts.

We notice here that Jesus is looking for something deeper. He's bringing this illustration out. But let's turn back to Matthew 11.

Matthew 11. Matthew 11. It says, Come.

The invitation again. As we read through the New Testament, we see this word come numerous times. We see it time and time again that God is calling us.

Please come. 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 until your souls. Are we responding to the invitation this morning? Jesus is pleading. Jesus is pleading, come.

Come. One of the last verses in the Bible, in Revelation 22.14. I'd just like to read that. That's chapter 22 of Revelation.

It says, And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that come, let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come.

Are we thirsty this morning? Are we hungering after God? It says, And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Again, the invitation. God is pleading.

God is begging. That we would hearken to the invitation this morning. Hebrews 3, the book of Hebrews.

There's a couple of verses there that have stood out to me as I was pondering the message. We know that many times, I think many of us can testify that sometimes our hearts become hardened. If we're not responding to the call, if we're not sensitive and we're not listening, our hearts can become calloused.

We don't hear God. Here in verse 8 or verse 7 of chapter 3, it says, Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith today, If ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works for forty years. Hear God.

God led him out of Egypt. He led them out of Egypt through the Red Sea on dry land. He saw all these wonderful... They saw all these miracles that God wrought in their life.

And yet, when they came to the other side, what did they do? They murmured against God. They murmured. We know how they came to the place, they call it Merah, in Exodus.

They came to a place where the water was bitter. And God... We know this story, how they took some palm trees and put them in the water. Exodus 15.

Verse 22 of Exodus 15. It says, So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea and they went out into the wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

Here, if we can bring a type in here. Here, God had delivered them from bondage. He had brought them out of Egypt.

Just like many of us have been delivered from Egypt. We've been delivered from our slavery. And here, He's brought them to the place in the wilderness where they went through the Red Sea.

And they thought they were loose from their enemies now. It says, When they came to Merah, they could not drink of the waters of Merah, for they were bitter. Therefore, the name of it was called Merah.

And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord. And the Lord showed him a tree which He had cast into the waters. The waters were made sweet.

And there He made for them a statute and an ordinance. And there He proved them. Verse 26.

Let's look carefully what He says here. If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians. For I am the Lord that healeth thee.

Again, a verse that would tie in with what Brother Philip was sharing this morning. That His face would shine upon us. Maybe we'll say that, Well, we wouldn't have done what the Israelites would have.

If we'd have seen all the miracles that the Israelites would have seen, we wouldn't do what they did. I mean, I know I've thought that. I've had those thoughts many times.

We wouldn't murmur when God would have taken us through the Red Sea on dry land. How He led us by a pillar in the night, pillar of fire in the night, cloud by day. I mean, look at all the miracles that they saw.

And yet, their hearts were hardened. There was only two out of that multitude. Caleb and Joshua.

They had a different spirit. They had a different spirit with them. They had a spirit of courage and of faith.

They looked on the bright side. They were looking for something. They knew that they could have it by faith.

But the others all fell into the wilderness. But what about us? What miracles have we seen today? And where are we at? We've seen greater things, haven't we? Now, we haven't seen the Lord crucified, but we know that Jesus has been crucified. He is hung on the cross for us.

And He's given us life. For those of us that have been born again, He's given us new life. That's a miracle.

And here, you know, what do we do with it? I know that we need daily sanctification. We need to be purged from day to day. What about the earthquake? There when Jesus rose from the dead, there was an earthquake.

And there were some people there that acknowledged Jesus as Lord. When that earthquake happened there at His crucifixion, they knew that this was God. But are we listening? Are we hearing the invitation this morning? Are we hearing the call that is going out? Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden.

Are we hearing the call this morning? Or are we just making excuses? What excuses are we talking about? Can we turn back to the gospel of Luke again? Luke 14, verse 24 of chapter 14. It says, For I say unto you that none of these men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. He's talking about these men that rejected the invitation.

They were not interested. They were just going their own way. They were not interested.

They had all these excuses. As Jesus was teaching this parable, verse 25, And there went great multitudes with Him. Let's notice how He changes the course here.

It says, And He turned. Those three words. And He turned.

Do we notice that? I see Him as walking down the road here. And it says there was a multitude behind Him. And He turned around.

And I think He wanted everyone's attention. He wanted everyone's attention to what He was going to say. Verse 26, it says, If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and hate not his mother, his wife, his children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot.

Those two words again. He cannot be My disciple. But what does this have to do with the marriage supper? Where is He making the connection here? I think the people probably wondered what Jesus was talking about.

Probably just took it literally. And then when He brought this in here, it made them think. Now He's looking at their life.

Now He's looking at their own perspective of life. Where are they? Are they selling out for God? How can we hate our Father? How can we hate our mother? Brother or sister? In Matthew 10, it reads a little differently. Matthew 10, verse 37.

If you can just keep your mark there. Keep your finger there in Luke 14. We'll turn back and forth a few times.

Keep your finger in there. Matthew 10, verse 37, it says, He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than Me.

He brings it down to where people can understand what He's saying. Do we love God above everyone else? Sometimes there are situations that come in our life that we say, well, our parents don't approve of it. Yet we know it's not Biblical correct.

Maybe we have a struggle with what's happening. I know that we need God's wisdom in discerning all these things. There's a place where I think we need to step out from Mom and Dad's authority.

As we mature and we grow into adulthood, we can't just always say, well, Mom and Dad don't want me to do this. So I guess I'll just stay where I am. And I don't feel like I can go on with God, but I have to honor my parents.

I think this is what God is speaking about. He wants us to honor God above everything else. I'm not talking about young children that are, you know, young.

But I'm talking about youth that grow up into adulthood. And sometimes we, I know from past experience, it tends to, we want to kind of lean on there. We want to have them for a crutch.

But God calls us to follow Him. He wants us to sell out and go all the way with Him. He doesn't want us to just, you know, have God second.

Jesus will not take the second seat. He does need the... Jesus will only take the front seat of our life. God will not take the second or the third or the fourth seat.

God forbid that we would try that. I know it's so easy in this land that we live in. We have all these things.

But oh, that God would give us that heart totally after Him. That we would lose our own life. We do serve a jealous God.

He's jealous. He wants our all. He desires all of us.

He's not satisfied with just a portion of it. It says if we don't love Him above all, we cannot be His disciple. We can't be His disciple.

Oh, that God would teach us these things. Show us these truths. You know, it's something that we hear a lot.

And I trust, you know, that I'm speaking to some younger persons here. To some younger souls that may be wrestling this morning and not sure where they're going. I just trust that God would awaken that desire in your hearts this morning.

That you would sell out for God. That you would desire to go all the way with Him. In Luke again, verse 27, it says, And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Here we come to the cross. We've heard about the cross this morning. And I think it's worthy that God speaks quite frequently about the cross.

Bearing our cross. Taking up our cross in the Gospels. What is the cross? What is our cross? We know that my cross is different from yours.

We all have our own cross to bear. God has a cross for each one of us to bear. Unless we're willing to bear that cross.

The Bible tells us we cannot be His disciple. The cross. The way of the cross.

We know that the cross is an object of scorn. Extreme pain. We know it brings death.

We know it brings ridicule. The cross. We know that Jesus was a perfect example for us.

We know that Jesus, He went the way before us and He bore His cross. He was willing to be ridiculed. He was willing to be mocked, scorned.

To be saved by grace is a gift beyond description. We know that God's grace is sufficient. Yet if we fall short of bearing our cross, we need to consider that.

We need to consider bearing our cross. What is our cross this morning? The Gospel bears the cross many times. And Paul speaks about the cross.

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul is speaking about the cross. Just read verse 12 here in chapter 4. Therefore, seeing we have this ministry as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commencing ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Verse 3, it says, But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken.

Think Paul speaking about the cross this morning. He's always bearing, verse 10 is what I really want to have us to see. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. If we bear, if we bear the body of the Lord Jesus, if we see Jesus as He is. In verse 11 he says, For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

So then death, verse 12, worketh in us, but life in you. Do we see this? Paul, he was acknowledging the cross. Paul was acknowledging the death of the Lord Jesus, and he was bringing it down into his own heart.

Galatians 2.20 I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Here Paul is again writing of his own, his life of the cross. A daily yielding to the cross.

And we can hear all this, we can hear the whole gospel, but if we don't get a hold of the cross. If we don't live by the cross, and all these other things will not fall in place. Will you respond to the invitation that God is calling us this morning? God is pleading.

He is pleading for our all. He is pleading for our hearts. He is pleading for our very motives this morning.

We know that His intent, the cross consists of our focuses directly on the intent. It's on the very motives of our heart. It penetrates to the very depth.

We know this is where the cross is truly, is effective. We know there are some religious systems that may take the cross and bring him out on a literal form. Just doing the outward things.

But, can I say this morning that that is not a cross? That is not a cross. I mean, when I was with my people, the outward things were not a problem. I could do those easy.

There is no cross involved in that. But when we deal with our motives, when we deal with our heart, with the hard issues of life, loving our brother, yielding our life to our brother, this is where God is looking. This is what God wants.

This is a heart that is sacrificed to Him. John 14, 21 to 23 says, If we love Him, we will keep His commandments. I'll just turn there, there's more there.

John 14, and it comes back again, that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, He it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father. And he that loveth me, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. Again, the invitation. If you will keep my commandments, if you will love me, God will take us through valleys.

He will take us through struggles. But we realize that as we do those things, as we go through those valleys, as we yield, He gives grace for those times, and He gives grace to overcome. He does give grace, but there is a choice on our part.

Are we going to yield to the choices? Are we going to yield to God's call? Are we going to respond to that invitation this morning, that we will lay down our life? We will yield. Hebrews 12, it's another, we know that when chastening comes, verse 12, excuse me, chapter 12, verse 11 of Hebrews, it says, for no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward, it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

It says, wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down in the feeble knees, and make straight path for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed. We know that as gold is

tried to the fire, it becomes more pure. And I believe that's much the way it works with us as Christians.

As we desire to follow after God, and God brings us to difficult situations, and we yield to that, we bow our hearts to that, God will refine us. He'll purge us. He'll bring us to a place where He can use us more and more.

But unless there's a yielding, unless there's a dying, unless there's a cross that we bear, we cannot be His disciple. We cannot be His disciple. As God purifies us, the blindness slowly leaves us, dispels us, dispels from us.

The blindness slowly, sometimes, you know, we're not living in the cross, we're not living under God's... We refuse to allow God to chastise us. And we become blind. We become to the point where we can't see our own needs.

Maybe all we do is make excuses, or maybe we justify ourselves. I was just sitting in a session with a person from a different community, and he had many needs in his life, but all he could see was his other person. All he could see was the faults of the others.

And he was unwilling, he was unwilling to yield his heart to Christ, to see his own need, to see Him as a sinner. He was not living in the cross. 1 John 2.4 says, He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith, he abideth in him, ought him also so to walk, even as he walked.

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which he had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which he had heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

He that saith, he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. Will we allow ourself to come under the cross, to be willing to die to our own self? Will we allow ourself to be broken? Hebrews 4.10, Hebrews 4.10, another beautiful verse, talking to the, for he that entered into his rest, he also hath seized from his own works.

As God did from his. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. Let us labor to enter into that rest.

One of those paradoxes again of God's word. How can we labor and yet enter into that rest? It's when we yield our life. When we come to the cross and we say, Yes, Lord, I'll go with you.

I'll allow your purging, whatever you design in my life, whatever you see that I need, I will go with you. I will allow your chasing to be upon me. No, the way of the cross is not the easy road, but it is the road to happiness.

It is the road to victory. It's the road to peace, joy. Do we desire that? The devil, he desires to keep that from us.

Many times we think that, especially I believe young people think that if they bow their hearts, then they'll be in bondage. But I want to assure you young people, it's the way to freedom. It's the way to true freedom in Christ Jesus.

Jesus is when we yield our life to Christ God. Jesus was the perfect example for that. Any other way will keep us in bondage, deception.

Sometimes we hear the remark made, I'm free now, I can do as I please. But I'm sorry, those people are still in bondage. They're still in bondage.

And only God, the Holy Spirit can reveal that truth to us. If we come to the place where we see that we need the cross, we need to take up our cross as Jesus has taught us. We need to turn to repentance.

We need to be willing to just be done, be willing, be broken. Not have our own agendas. Will we respond to the invitation? I would like to just make a few applications, just a few points here.

Now sometimes maybe we look at the cross, but maybe we're not looking. Deep within, what is our cross? Where does the cross apply to my life? And I can't tell you where your cross is, but you need to search. You need to seek God.

And I believe all of us, for the most part, know where our cross is, what our struggle is, where our dying needs to take place. Point number one is, what about our immediate family? The father to the children, or the mother to the children, or the siblings to each other. How do we relate to each other? Are we bearing our cross in our family circle? We're not just talking about the cross here at church, we're talking about our everyday life.

Are we willing to lay down our life? What I mean by that is, are we allowing the others? Are we esteeming the others better than ourselves? Are we willing to have our will denied? You know, sometimes when someone denies something from us, we desire to have something, and we're denied that. You know, that's hard, but God teaches us that we need to deny ourselves. That comes back to our own personal life.

It doesn't mean that as long as someone allows me to have something, then it's okay. But it comes back to our own personal, it comes very personal. We need to deny ourself.

Unless we do that, we cannot walk in the Spirit of Christ. We cannot walk in the Spirit of God. Unless we deny ourself, deny the flesh, it wants to rise up.

And it's not a one-time deal. We need to continually die, and die, and die again. But God supplies the grace if we're willing.

He supplies the ability. He gives us strength beyond what we even know, if we're willing. I believe many of us could testify to that.

Maybe we're going through a very difficult thing. And in our own strength we say it's impossible. But if we're willing, God gives the grace.

God gives the strength to overcome that thing of dying. Dying to ourself. You older children in the family, how do you treat your younger ones? I think this was just brought up here not too long ago.

How do we relate? How do we relate to our younger siblings? Husbands, how do you relate to your wives? And wives, how do you relate to your husbands? I fall short. But brothers, I'm not excusing you. And I'm not excusing myself.

Are we willing? Are we willing? Are we willing to lay down that thing that struggles within our breasts? And we know it's just our own selfishness. We are all selfish by nature. Some more and some less.

But we all have that selfish nature within our hearts. That needs to die. It needs to be pushed down.

But by the grace of God, He gives us power to do that. Maybe someone has offended us. Maybe someone has offended us unknowingly.

Are we going to forgive that person? Do we just forgive that person and go on? Or do we say, well, he did it intentionally? Even if he had done it intentionally, this doesn't give us any place. God uses all these circumstances to bring us to a place where He wants us. I can testify many times that God brings things I don't understand why.

And yet I realize I need purging. I thank God for that. I want His purging on my life.

I'm not where I want to be, but I desire to have my heart clean. My heart is clean. But yet there's always things that we need to work through.

Sometimes there's situations that come up. Are we going to say, okay, Lord, I see my error. I'm going to repent.

I'll repent. I'll turn around. I'll go the opposite way.

Not just say it hasn't happened, but we don't acknowledge it, but we turn around. Maybe for young children. Maybe even older children.

Many times there's discussions. Who's going to have the last word? This is a form of selfishness. Sometimes we like to debate.

We like to have an argument. And maybe we long to see, or we desire to have the last word. As one brother shared just recently, he said he always felt like he was always the winner.

Many times he was the winner on issues of debate. But there was still something in his heart that wasn't quite right. But when we allow others to have the last word, just simply die to that.

It's not wrong for us to express our views. And many times it's just carnal issues for that matter. But if there's issues, and even if there's spiritual issues, there's times that we just need to just die.

Just die. We know what Jesus did when He was before the trial there. Jesus, He was... The only times He spoke was when they asked, Are you the Son of God? And He would say, I am.

Or when they would ask, Who He is? And He would say, The Son of God. But when they brought all this accusation, He didn't tell them, That's not right. That's not true.

I never did a sin. He never said that. Christ was a good example.

Perfect example. The Apostle Paul said, I die daily. I die daily.

Can we testify to that? If we can't, then maybe there's something that needs to change. Maybe there's something in our life that's not right if we're not dying daily. God help us, that we would die daily.

How nice it would be if we could just die once and for all. It doesn't work that way. I wish I could tell you in a formula that we could do that.

That would be so nice. But it's not God's heart. He wants us to daily depend upon Him.

Day by day by day by day. Progressive sanctification. And lastly, if I could just share with you a little bit.

Look at Moses' life. Moses, he was a man of... He was called by God. And he felt the calling on God's life.

I mean, he felt the call that God had put upon him to lead the children out of Egypt. But Moses was not in tune, was he? He was not hearing correctly, was he? Yes, he was hearing that he had a calling, but he was not willing to wait. And we know the story how God had to take him out into the wilderness.

For how many years? For just a year? It was 40 years. And God taught him how to lead the people. God had to bring that proud man.

How long does it take for us? Are we willing? Are we willing to listen to God? To be just open, ready, willing, listening. And sometimes we hear incorrectly. God doesn't condemn us for that.

But that we're listening. That we're listening to the call that God has for us. Oh, that God would show us.

Will we heed to His invitation? If I could just share one short little testimony here before I close. To the glory of God. I struggled a little bit whether I should share it, but... In my... Before I was married, God spoke to my heart.

That someday I would be a preacher. And this caused some... I'm not sure how to say it. It caused some anxiety.

And yet, I wanted to follow God. I wanted to do His will. And after we were married a couple of years, ordination came around.

And I thought, here it comes. But God was not ready for me. I was in the lot.

The books were open. And I was not the one. So I wrestled through that.

And I thought, okay. Okay, God. I accept that.

But the time came again. About seven, eight years later. About ten years of our married life.

Here comes ordination again. This time I thought, it's probably... I probably won't pass. I probably won't get by without being ordained this time.

But you know what happened? Again, nothing happened. I was again in the lot. But the books were open.

And I was not the chosen one. And so by that time, God really started dealing. More.

I felt like I was surrendered. But yet, I'm not sure that I was. Our hearts are deceitful.

And desperately wicked. A couple of years later, we had another ordination. And again, I was in the lot.

But I was not the chosen one. This happened three times. And so finally, I just told God again and again, Lord, I don't want it.

I don't want it unless you're in it. I want your heart. I want your will, Father.

I'm not sure that I can say that I had everything laid down completely like I should have. But God did the work through that. And I would like to leave that with you, men, this morning.

I'm sure there are people in this room that are called in the ministry someday to get up and preach, but wait on God's calling. Wait on God's timing. Don't go out like Moses did and try to do it in your own strength.

It will not come out right. It was something for me to go through that. And I thank God for it.

I just feel like God had His divine hand upon it. Because if I had been ordained there, I probably would have stayed there. And God knew everything.

So I just want to leave that word with you. One last thought is, again, are our hearts open? Are our hearts yielded to God? Is our hearts responding to Him? Yes, Lord. Whatever you have, the cross, are we willing? Are we open? Is our hearts laid open, bare? Is there any sin hidden there? That's my challenge that I would like to leave with us all.

Can we kneel for prayer? Yes, Father in heaven, we do command this time into your hands, Lord. Father, we do pray for each, each soul that is represented here, Lord. God, we pray this morning that your Spirit would make further applications, Lord.

Father, we know that it's only the work of this Holy Spirit to convict, Lord, and to test us, Lord, and to search us out, Father. Oh, God, I pray that each one would have their hearts opened, Lord. Lean open and transparent, Father, before you, Lord.

You would be able to minister to them, Lord Jesus. Father, we know there is no better place to rest than in the cross, in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, I pray for each soul that is here.

Lord, bless each one. Father, we commit this, these few words that were spoken, Lord, into your hands. Pray that you would make further applications, Lord.

God, that you would be lifted up, that your name would be exalted, Lord. Father, we want to go with you. We want to hear, Lord, from you in our everyday life.

Lord, we don't want to be a Sunday Christian, but Lord, we want to be a Christian every day of the week. Lord, teach us. Walk with us, Lord.

Prompt us, Lord. Teach us your ways. Teach us, Lord, how to take up our cross, to deny ourself, and to follow you.

God, we beseech you by the mercies of God. We thank you, Father. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. We heard true words there.

Jesus said, My words shall never pass away. Never. And that means this morning too.

Jesus of Nazareth has a wedding coming as sure as you're sitting in this room. Just as sure as you plan to come this morning, you'll be at that wedding. Invitation anyway.

And that deciding time when you park ways this way, welcome to the wedding feast. Oh, you don't have a wedding gown. Depart from me.

That's the history of every one of our lives written beforehand. Beautiful truth. I especially appreciated that call to the cross again, brother.

I bless God for putting that right after that sober teaching on the wedding day because I'm looking forward to that day. I'm looking forward to the wedding. I hope to be there.

And when I say hope, I don't mean I'm wondering. I mean I'm looking forward to it. The Lord Jesus is going to gird Himself in service if I bear my cross.

Praise God. Good truth. Maybe some of you have some things in your heart.

Maybe God's speaking to you. You have something you need to share with the congregation. Maybe you have a fervent truth to add to that that will encourage and build up the body of Christ here this morning.

I encourage you to do that. Please do that. This week I went to visit my brother and my sister-in-law and I received a real blessing.

I heard that she had cancer. So I went to visit and she was doing fine. She looked really well.

And she said when she felt these lumps in her shoulder, she thought they couldn't be malignant. She went to a doctor and she found out they were. And she was so discouraged and depressed and she was kind of angry about it and she just couldn't accept it.

And finally she came to the place where she just laid it down. She prayed, God, if this is the way you want me to go, I want to accept it. If you want to use this cancer to take me home, that's fine with me.

I just want to give myself up to it. And she said it was the next morning or maybe, I'm not sure just exactly how soon, right soon afterwards, she was sitting in her chair and she felt a hand on her shoulder. And she said it was so clear that she turned around to see who was there and there was no one there.

And her tumors disappeared. And I asked her if she was telling people about this and she said, well, it's kind of a dilemma, but she hates to tell too many people because she knows that the Lord doesn't always heal. And sometimes He does use cancer to take people home.

And she doesn't want to destroy the faith of people who don't receive that kind of healing. So I wasn't sure exactly what to tell her, but I was blessed by her testimony anyway. Praise God.

Well, God does heal sometimes and we should give Him praise and glory for what He does. Amen. Praise God.

If you have something to share, I encourage you, raise your hand. It's a blessing to the whole body. I also want to ask for a prayer request for my wife's dad.

He's been in the hospital, I guess three weeks ago. He fell out of the tree when he was picking apples and he broke his neck. And he's been laid up ever since, but he can walk some.

But it seems like lately he's been depressed and not really know how to take everything. I'd like to request prayer for him. Last night he went to the hospital about 3 o'clock.

They admitted him to the hospital because he was kind of listless and not really responding and he has high blood pressure and everything. He has a lot of depression and self-condemnation and stuff. So I just request prayer that you would, I guess, if you think about it, pray for him and that he would be clear with God and that he would place his trust in Him.

I'm not exactly sure where he's at, but it seems like he needs to have faith. He believes that Jesus died for him, but he don't really accept it, I guess, because he wasn't good enough. So we need to realize that, I guess, we need to make it aware to him as a family that it's because of Jesus that he can be saved.

So just pray for us and pray for him. What is his name? Henry Zook. That's your father-in-law? Yes, my wife's father, yes.

Amen. Amen. Okay, pray for Henry Zook.

Lift up the name of Jesus to him. Sometimes we can be hesitant to deal with a man who's looking at death. I think that's a mistake.

That's when we need to be the boldest. That's when we need the comfort of Christ when we walk through those waters. Someone else? I'd like to share a testimony as I give glory to God.

The past few days I've been struggling, wondering, or struggling between looking at my own weaknesses and failures that I know versus depending all upon God and just having confidence in His strength. And I praise Him that He has shown me that He has been calling me to just come to His rest. And I'm so glad that we have a God that I can trust.

I know that He is a firm rock that I can base my whole life upon Him. I was sitting here during the message and thinking about the illustration that Brother Vernon had brought of those that were invited to the wedding feast, 400 invited and only a few show up. And I got to thinking that, you know, really, if we look at that, how would Nathan feel if Helen didn't show up? And how would Kevin feel if Jewel didn't? When they've gone to all that work to prepare that place, and we are the bride of Christ.

So, I don't know where to go with that, but I thought that really puts a responsibility on my heart to show up. To show up to that wedding. Thank the Lord for the message.

May we all show up. Jesus of Nazareth is going to have a wedding. And we're the bride.

We are the bride. Okay, Jewel? Well, I thank the Lord for being here today. In the first message, we heard how Jesus was our scapegoat, so to speak.

And that sort of struck me. That's an awesome thing, that curse that I deserve. When Jesus said, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? He said it in a very deep, in a very deep anguish.

But He took that curse, that's mine, that was mine. And that struck me. And that's not a small thing.

And I just feel like saying, Thank you, Lord, for that. That's not a small thing. And that's the very reason that we're here today.

We didn't come here to practice some dead religious thing. It's because of that curse that He took and how it motivates us to follow Him and to make Him our Lord. Concerning the second message, Brother Vernon said, The cross focuses on the intents of the heart.

I believe that's a statement that I know that I have to learn more of what that means. I believe it's a very deep statement that if we get a hold of that, it's going to change our lives and keep changing our lives. And that's what I want.

Lord bless you. Amen, brother. Thank you for being honest.

That's good. If you're sitting here this morning and God is dealing with your heart, it will be a blessing to you if you share it. It will be a blessing to you.

I just encourage you. If you have an area of your life that's a weakness and you struggle with and you are not able to take up the cross, if you confess it, it will be a blessing in your life. I can testify to it.

John? Thank you, brother, for that. I do confess that there's an area that God's been dealing with me and that's the area of time. We've been listening this morning about all the things that God has done for us and how can we do for Him in return and what we can do with our lives, give Him our lives.

But it seems like we're always struggling with time and the lack of it. And I was challenged last night as we were preparing for today as a family and everybody ran around the house and started turning the clocks back an hour. And the first thing that comes to mind is you get another hour of sleep.

But I was challenged to not take that hour of sleep but give it to the Lord. And that being a perfect time to not take that hour, just leave that thing go until the morning and then give it to the Lord. And that's what I would ask for prayer for for me and my family, that we could give that hour to the Lord every day in the morning and go on from there.

It just brought a joy to my heart when that hit me. I just wanted to share that with everybody if anybody else would get something from that. That's challenging, brother.

Thank you. Amen. Amen.

Let everything be done for edification. I came this morning really needing to hear from the Lord. Kind of feeling discouraged.

And He was faithful again. The first message just spoke right to my heart. I found myself yesterday as everybody was helping us move and just the blessing of the Lord that the Lord has given us.

I just felt overwhelmed and I found myself looking inside trying to find some good thing inside of me why I deserve this but I couldn't find anything. And then thinking how could I ever repay all these people? Not only am I not able, it's just not there. I can never pay them back for everything that we did.

And that left me feeling very empty and discouraged. And the Lord so clearly spoke to me this morning that I don't deserve it. It's all Jesus and what He's done.

And it just really keeps pouring His blessings into my life. And I haven't deserved any of them. And I never will.

And I can just rest in that. And I thank you. Thank you, sister.

Anyone else? It's not every morning we have a little bit of time just to wait on the Lord and share hearts with one another. Brian, in the back there. I'm sorry again for my poor English.

But I have a question this morning. Everybody responds to His invitation. There's nobody here who has to respond.

Jesus calls you, invites you to the supper. Everybody here has to respond. Everybody is forgiving.

Everybody has the peace. Everybody is sure for the glory of God, for the salvation. Think about it.

Jesus loves you. For that, He calls you. He calls me.

He wants to bless us. Because remember, there will come a day when He calls just for the blessing people. He calls just His church.

He will say, Come to Me. You already received the blessing. You respond to Me.

I bless you. Come to Me in the glory. Again, if somebody here who didn't respond to Jesus, you can respond now.

You can say now, Yes, Jesus, I come to You. I come to You right now. I give my heart to You right now.

Blessing me. Because You will come again for the blessing people. God bless you to respond His invitation to be with Him in glory.

Amen. Amen. Thank you, brother.

Yes, I just want to take the opportunity to thank the Lord for His mercy. One of the ways that the Lord shows us that He loves us is by chastisement. I feel like I've been going through some of that.

Although it's painful to the body, I choose to rejoice in it just to know that I am a child of His and that He does love me. He's trying to correct me, bring me back to the path that I feel like I've strayed from. I just want to confess before you all that I'm failing in the disciplines of the Christian life, just allowing myself to get too busy, trying to do too many things, not taking time to pray and read the Word of God, study the Word of God, spend time reaching out to others, all those things that are very important.

So, I want to change. I don't want to stay where I'm at. But I desire your prayers, your input into my life.

I need you all. And I want to be there for you too. I guess I would ask you to pray that God would give me wisdom to know how to simplify my life, that I could do the things that I need to do, and yet do them in faith.

We're not saved by our devotions, but we're saved by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That's what I want. Amen.

Thank you, brother. Brother Nolan. As Brother Brian was sharing, I thought about these verses.

Revelation 3.19-20 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent. 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. Hallelujah. Amen.

I had to think when Brother Vernon was talking about discipline there, how it's not pleasant. You know when you have a child and you're disciplining him, all the father's wishing for is that he'd hurry up and yield so we can get this over with. Isn't that all the father wants? Would you just bow your heart quick so we can get this over? I don't like this either, but we're sure not going to go on the way it is.

And that's the way God is. He says, I don't smite the wicked because I want to. He doesn't discipline with pleasure, but He wants us to share His holiness, and He wants us to hurry up and yield.

And if you're sitting here this morning with a smug determination in your heart, and God is speaking to you, and you've got the bolt on the door, I tell you, He will not give up. He will not even give up until the day of judgment when He puts you on the left, or on the left side. Depart from Me.

You never open the door. Why not open the door? All He's inviting you to do is come to a wedding feast. Will you come to My wedding feast? I've got My oxen slain.

It's going to be a beautiful time. Would you come? How foolish children are to shut the door on Dad when He's pleading with them. And even disciplining them, encouraging them.

Would you yield please? Please yield. And our brother's right. You can yield this morning.

You can make a choice this morning and say, I'm done. I'm done holding out. I'm giving up.

What do I need to do God? Here I am. I'm taking steps. Amen.

Well, thank you. We have one more? Okay. Brother? Yes, I've got, I guess a couple of needs.

One is just simply to echo what Brian had shared. Just more prayer. Just to, I guess especially prayer for others and just to have those brothers and sisters of the congregation more in my heart.

And then, I think one that is a wall that I need to break down is just my evangelism with some of the extended members of my family especially. I guess my family in general. It's not as if I haven't done anything at all, but I think I just settle for just giving out a tape or or just doing just a little bit here just with the purpose of just giving the blood off my hands.

And, I just want just to have so much more of a, I guess a spirit-filled desire and, I don't know how to totally describe it, but just a heart totally torn and wanting to see some of my extended family saved. I mean, there's one that I really haven't done anything at all. There's a bridge that needs to be made there.

I'm not sure exactly what to do, but I've backed down a couple of times where I've called some of my folks and that's, that needs to change. I do ask your prayer and acknowledge my need to, I guess just to dig in and love with all my heart and not in a, again, not just in settling for just giving out a tape, but just a living dynamic relationship with some of my family. But, God bless Phillip and Vernon just for sharing what's on your heart and giving more of that truth.

It's no new thing. We've heard this morning, but it is so true and so right. So I praise God and thank you both for giving what you did.

Amen. Well, I think we'll bring this part of our service to a close here. Can we stand to our feet and have a word of prayer and just lift up some of these, let's lift up some of these needs that have been shared here this morning.

Brother Jacob, do I understand, does your father-in-law have cancer? Neck problem? Oh, he broke his neck. Okay. Okay, he fell off a ladder.

Is that how it was? Okay. Alright, thank you. Well, let's lift these things up as a congregation together.

Father, we come into Your presence again in the name of Jesus in prayer to lift up these concerns, Lord. Thank You so much for Your kindness to us this morning. Thank You that You are a God who dwells above the cherubim.

Earth is Your footstool and You are high and exalted, and yet You dwell with those who are of a contrite heart. Thank You, Father, for coming and visiting with us this morning. Thank You for Your Word.

Father, we lift up these requests. I do pray for Henry Zook this morning. We lift up that man to You, Lord.

Concern for his soul and his comfort. Lord, would You comfort his soul not by health, not by anything the doctor says, but by an assurance that his heart is right with Jesus Christ and a yielded will to the will of God. Lord, would You do that? Work that first in his life and then bring healing to his body that he might glorify God and have the strength to testify of Jesus Christ in this world.

Glorify Your name in that man's life. We pray. Father, I also pray for Jake that You give him a strength.

Give him the strength to speak and encourage. Lord, we thank You for that miracle that You worked on that woman that David spoke of. Lord, bless that woman.

Thank You for her testimony of a yielded will to God. Thank You for the way You work, God. You are so good.

Who is a God like You? You are wise. Thank You. I also pray, Lord, for Brian and the things that he shared there.

We do agree that You would give him wisdom, Lord, in his time and grant him that thing that he desires most, a relationship, a close and a personal relationship with Christ. Draw him near to Yourself, Lord. Then, Father, I also pray for Mark too as he's opened up his heart here this morning.

I pray Your blessing on him. Father, blend his heart with ours. Set him free to love his relatives, to love their souls and to wish for their salvation.

Thank You, Father. In the name of Christ, Amen.

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