

The Invitation

Message by: Leroy Surface

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.

Revelation 22:17

Introduction

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

II Timothy 1:6-11

I would call your attention to the words in this text that say, "... God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling..." It is that "holy calling" I will speak about in this message. The Greek word translated "calling" in this scripture is the word "klesis," and literally means "an invitation." God Almighty has extended a "holy invitation" to every person living on earth today. The scripture further tells us that it is an "invitation" that is not based upon our works but upon "...His own purpose and grace." What God has called us unto is far beyond the ability of man to be or to do anything of himself. That is what the scripture means when it says "...not according to our works..." There is nothing we could ever do to save ourselves, sanctify ourselves, keep ourselves, or to empower ourselves. This salvation and calling is not based upon any human work or ability, but, as He said in the scripture, it is based upon His own purpose and grace "which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began..." Before God ever made a man, He purposed what man would be. In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Genesis 2:7 continue, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Three thousand years after the transgression and fall of Adam, the Psalmist asked this question concerning fallen man in Psalms 8:4, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visits him?" In the next verse he answers his own question, "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor." The word the Psalmist used that was translated "angels" was the Hebrew word "elohym," actually meaning "God." God purposed that man would be in His own image and likeness; would be made just a little lower than God Himself; and would bear the "glory and honor" of God. This is what was purposed by God for man. This is that which was "given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Our text continues, "...but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ..." God's purpose for man is revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ. In fact, Romans 8:29 tells us we are predestined "to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of

all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Hebrews 1:1-4

In this text, if you would see what God is, look to Jesus. He is the “*brightness of His glory.*” He is the “*express image of His person.*” We remember that Jesus told Phillip in John 14:9, “*he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*” He explains in the next verse, “*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*” In Hebrews 2:9, if you would see God's man, look to Jesus. “*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels (as the first man was) for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor (as the first man was); that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*” Everything that was “*made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ,*” is that which was “*given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*” God Almighty has called man: He has “*invited*” man to “*be*” everything God purposed from the beginning that he would be and to possess everything God gave him in Christ from before the world was.

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II Thessalonians 2: 13-14

What a powerful and revealing text this is concerning our “*salvation*” and our “*holy calling.*” Consider our “*calling*” first. We are called “*to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” This is the “*invitation*” that is extended to every person on earth. In Ephesians 3:8, Paul said he preached “*...among the gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ.*” Earlier in the text Paul had spoken of the “*dispensation of the grace of God which,*” he said, “*is given me to you-ward.*” In this text, the “*grace of God*” is synonymous with the “*unsearchable riches of Christ.*” Paul was sent by the Lord to call the gentiles, to “*invite*” them to come and be made partakers of the unsearchable riches of Christ. The “*gentiles*” were yet idolaters, but they received the invitation. They still worshiped devils when Paul came to them, but He extended the invitation for them to come. Jesus had suffered and died for all. The invitation is given to all. The unsearchable riches of Christ are set before all, if they will come to God through Jesus Christ. The “*holy invitation*” goes out to people of every religion known to man. It reaches out to “*atheists,*” to “*cultist,*” to those bound to witchcraft and even Satanism. It is a call to “*whosoever will.*” All may come. All may “*obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

While the “*invitation*” goes out to sinners and idolaters, etc, the glory and the unsearchable riches are never given to sinners. First, there is the matter of “*salvation*” which is for every man. If you would accept the invitation to the “*glory and honour of Jesus Christ,*” you must first be “*saved.*” You must understand also that the “*manner*” of this “*salvation*” not just from the “*penalty*” of our sin but from “*sin*” itself. It is as Paul said, “*God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.*” Notice, he said that our salvation is “*through sanctification of the spirit.*”

This speaks of being “*washed from our sins.*” Revelation 1:5-6 says it this way, “*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father...*” Paul told Titus of the purpose of the death of Jesus in Titus 2:14, “*Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*” He has a people who are “*redeemed from all iniquity*” and “*purified unto Himself...*” This is what “*...salvation through sanctification of the spirit...*” is all about. It does not take God a lifetime to wash you from your sin. It doesn't take a year, or a

month, week, or even a day. Upon your repentance in Godly sorrow for sin, and your belief of the truth, the work is finished. In truth, it is finished at the cross of Christ, where our old man was crucified (Romans 6:6).

The Invitation

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. BUT THEY MADE LIGHT OF IT, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Then saith he to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Matthew 22:1-14

A great honor had been bestowed on a chosen few. They had received invitations to the wedding of the king's son. A great feast was prepared at the king's palace, where the guests would sit down at the table with the king in celebration of the marriage of his son. No expense was spared in preparation for this great wedding day. The fatted calves were killed. The finest chefs in the kingdom were employed to prepare the feast. Never again in their lifetimes could these guests be so greatly honored as they would be this day. They were invited to the king's palace to the marriage of the king's own son. Many would have given their fortune for such an opportunity, but only a chosen few were invited. The king's servants were sent out to escort the guests to the wedding in royal fashion, but an amazing thing happened. The chosen guests would not come. A second time the king sent his servants to bring the guests to the wedding, telling them, "*all things are ready: come to the marriage.*" Instead of coming, the chosen guests made light of the invitation. They continued in their own affairs and went about their own businesses. Some of the chosen guests persecuted the king's servants and even murdered some of them. Who could blame the king when he sent his armies to destroy the murderers and burn their city? Those who the king had so greatly honored with invitations to the marriage feast had publicly ridiculed the king and brought him to shame on the day of his son's wedding.

This first part of Jesus' parable was specifically given to the Chief Priests and the Pharisees. It was given to them as a warning. God Almighty had set such great honor before them. They were the generation to which the Messiah had come. They were the spiritual leaders of Israel in that generation. Surely they would rejoice over their Messiah, the very Son of God Himself, but they did not. They refused to receive Him and plotted His death instead. They were seeking for a means to entrap Him and, through some legal means, destroy Him. Jesus knew what was in their hearts, but even now, longed for them to believe Him. They did not. Within days of this parable they had Him arrested and brought to trial before false witnesses. He was condemned as a blasphemer and delivered over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. Jesus even foretold the destruction of Jerusalem in this parable, the result of their treatment of God's own Son.

In the second part of the parable, the king sent his servants again, this time not to a “*chosen few*,” but to “*whosoever will*.” “*Go ye therefore into the highways*,” the king said, “*and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage*.” The parable said they went out and gathered as many as they found, “*both bad and good*,” to come to the wedding. This part of the parable speaks of the gospel “*invitation*” being extended to everyone, regardless of his or her nationality, race, color, or even their religious background. “*Whosoever will*” may come. The great “*honor*” that was prepared for the “*chosen few*,” was now bestowed upon “*any*” and “*all*” that would come. Specifically we can relate this part of the parable to the time the gospel began to go to the “*Gentiles*.” According to the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:12, the gentiles were a people “*... without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*.” They were “*idolaters*,” worshiping devils and demon spirits, and “*god's*” they had fashioned with their own hands. It was to these that God extended the invitation to receive the great “*honor*” the “*chosen*” had refused. Very clearly, according to the scripture, the “*unsearchable riches of Christ*” (Ephesians 3:8) were set before these “*godless*” gentiles if they would come.

The house was filled with guests. When the king came in to see his guests, he saw a man who was not clothed in a “*wedding garment*.” The king was indignant. “*How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment*,” he asked? The king had furnished wedding garments for each guest. Why had not this man put his on? The answer must be the same as why the “*chosen*” had refused to come. He “*took it lightly*.” Even though he had come to the palace, it was a “*light*” thing for him. He did not comprehend the great honor that had been bestowed upon him. He perceived it to be a “*come as you are*” event. In the king's wrath he commanded his servants to “*...bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” The parable ends with this conclusion by our Lord, “*many, are called, but few are chosen*.”

Invited! To Eternal Life

We have received an invitation that is in every way so extremely beyond that which any earthly king could ever give. God Almighty has set before us “*the unsearchable riches of Christ*.” We are invited to be “*joint heirs*” with His only begotten Son, Jesus. Our “*invitation*” is not, as the earthly king's was, to merely attend the wedding of the Son, but ours is an invitation to be “*sons of God*” and “*joint heirs*” with Christ (Romans 8:16-17). It is an invitation to be “*joined to the Lord*,” to be “*one*” with Him. It is an invitation to “*fellowship*” with the Father and with His Son. There is no higher “*calling* (invitation)” in this world or the world to come than that which is set before us, if we will come. We must not take it lightly. We remember that Esau “*despised*” his birthright. He did not “*hate*” it, but he “*took it lightly*.” Esau found no space for repentance, though he sought it bitterly with tears (Hebrews 8:12-17). The invitation God has given us must not be taken lightly. For such honor and glory as that which God has set before us to be refused is to bring the fiercest of God's wrath upon the one refusing.

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

I John 5:11-12

...in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

Titus 1: 2

The promise of God to man is “*eternal life*.” No one from Adam till Jesus Christ had this life. The “*breath*” that is in our natural bodies is not what God calls life. In fact, every person that has not been “*born again*” of the Spirit of God is “*dead*” in sin (Ephesians 2:4-5). Many “*religious*” people believe they have eternal life while they are still in their sins. They have repeated a prayer, been baptized in water, maybe joined the church; they have been told they have “*eternal life*,” and can never lose it because, they say, “*it is eternal*.” These

continue in sin, believing they have a “*guarantee*” of Heaven when they die. Their only concept of “*eternal life*” is “*living for ever and ever in a life very much like this life, but never ending.*” The truth is, if you want to know what life is, you must “*see Jesus.*” He said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6).” The Apostle John is speaking of Jesus when he writes these words in I John 1:1-2: “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;).*” In this text, John refers to Jesus as the “*Word of life,*” or, by literal translation, “*The divine expression of life.*” John continues, “*...the life was manifested, and we have seen it...*” He is speaking of Jesus as the “*life.*” He was “*life*” manifested and seen by man. John 1:4 says, “*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*” Can you comprehend that “*life*” is manifested and can be seen? John said, “*We have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*” When John says, “*we...shew unto you that eternal life,*” he acknowledges that “*eternal life*” is also manifest in everyone who receives it. The same “*life*” which was “*seen*” in Jesus, was also “*seen*” in John as well as the other apostles and the saints in that day.

The word “*eternal*” in “*eternal life*” speaks of far more than the duration of “*life.*” More importantly, it speaks of the “*nature*” of “*life.*” No sinner has eternal life, for the very concept would be a contradiction.” *Eternal life*” is the very life of God indwelling the child of God. In Galatians 2:20, Paul said, “*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.*” The “*life*” was not Paul, but it was “*Christ*” who lived in Paul. It was “*life manifested in the flesh,*” hence Paul says, “*the life I now live in the flesh...*” God Almighty has “*invited*” us into “*eternal life*” that we can receive through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“*Eternal life*” is more than “*life without end,*” because it also has no beginning. Man’s “*life*” has a beginning. Even if man could “*live forever,*” it would not be “*eternal life.*” Only the “*life*” that was “*from the beginning ... with the Father* (I John 1:2)” is eternal by nature. We are invited to “*enter into eternal life.*” There are five places in the scripture where Jesus spoke of “*entering*” into life. Salvation is not simply adding to our “*life*” in either quantity or quality. If it were possible for man to so change his “*lifestyle*” until it were a perfect “*imitation*” of Jesus, still that man would not have obtained eternal life. Life must be entered into, and there is only one entrance into eternal life, and that is through...”*death.*”

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

II Timothy 2.

Notice Paul’s saying to Timothy, “*...if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him.*” It is not the natural death of this body that gives us entrance into eternal life, but it is death “*with Christ,*” hence, “*...if we be dead with Him...*” Paul makes this clear in Romans 6:3: “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*” He further clarifies this in Romans 6:6-8, saying, “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him (Christ), that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.*” This is the “*faithful saying*” of Paul to Timothy, “*...if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with him.*” Death with Christ is our entrance into life with Christ. The promise of “*life*” to those who are “*dead*” with Christ is not futuristic, but it is a promise of eternal life right now to those who died with Christ. Both death and life are present realities in every child of God. We are “*dead to sin,*” and we are “*alive unto God* (Romans 6:11).” Both are the inherent nature of “*eternal life.*”

Invited! To Be the “Bride”

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

John 17:20-21

This is the last prayer Jesus prayed for us just the night before He was crucified. Knowing that He was going to suffer the cross, willing to die if it be not in vain, He seems to be reviewing the terms of the New Covenant He is about to confirm with His own blood. Hebrews 12:2 speaks of Jesus, “...*who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” Those things He asked the Father for in the seventeenth chapter of John are the “*Joy that was set before Him.*” Chief among the things He desired of the Father was that every believer would be “*one*” with Him. This prayer is not, as many today believe, a desire for unity among all the sects and denominations of the “*church.*” If such a thing came to pass, it would not be the “*bride*” of Christ: it would be the “*body*” of the great harlot described in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation. His prayer and passionate desire for us is that each and every believer individually would be one with Him, He said, “...*as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.*” The “*invitation*” goes out to every living man or woman to be “*one*” with Him. We would have the relationship with Him that He had with the Father.

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit

I Corinthians 6: 17

This verse in context is speaking about “*marriage.*” We are invited to the “*marriage*” of the Son of God, not as a “*wedding guest,*” but our invitation is to be the “*bride.*” Take the human relationships out of marriage, and you will find that “*marriage*” means “*to take two and make them one.*” Marriage is used in many different ways but always with the same meaning. “*Marriage*” is also a nautical term, speaking of the method a seaman uses to join two ropes end to end making them “*one*” without increasing the diameter or decreasing the strength. A person can be said to be “*married*” to his job, his hobby, or to his religion. Before Jesus came, God's people were “*married*” to the Law of Moses. Notice the language in Romans 7:4, “*Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*” When we were “*baptized*” into the death of Jesus (Romans 6:3), we not only died to sin, but also to the “*law.*”

Notice that the scripture said we are “*dead to the law.*” Many rejoice that they are “*free*” from the law, with the result being that they can “*continue in sin* (Romans 6:1)” without the “*condemnation*” of the law. We are “*dead to the law*” to be married to Christ. Death is the only acceptable way to dissolve a marriage. We had to “*die*” with Christ to dissolve our “*marriage*” to the law. The sole purpose of our “*death*” to the law is that we “...*should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*” Just as “*death with Christ*” is our entrance into eternal life, so it is in His death that we are “*joined*” to the Lord. We are “*crucified with* (in union with) *Him* (Romans 6:6).” We are “*buried with* (in union with) *Him* (Romans 6:4).” We are “*quickened...together with* (in union with) *Christ* (Ephesians 2:5).” Finally, God has “*raised us up together* (with Christ), *and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*”

The matter of being “*joined to the Lord,*” or “*married to Christ,*” is not a promise to be fulfilled someday when we get to heaven. The child of God is married to Christ right now. The purpose of this union is, as stated in Romans 7:4, “...*that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*” It is now, in this present life, that God desires the “*fruit*” of His children. In John 15:5, Jesus says, “*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me; and I in him* (he that is one with Him), *the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*”

Invited! To Reign With Him

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

Psalms 110: 1-3

David, speaking by the Holy Ghost, gave us this prophecy of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The fulfillment began when Jesus ascended to Heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father. Notice in particular the second verse of this text; *“The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.”* This is to be fulfilled while Jesus is yet seated at the Father's right hand in Heaven. Most of us believe, according to the scriptures, that Jesus will rule and reign *“after”* He returns to earth, but according to this text, He *“rules in the midst of His enemies”* even now, while He sits in the throne of Heaven. Also, notice that the *“rod of His strength”* is sent *“out of Zion.”* Zion, in this prophecy, speaks of His people (Hebrews 12:22-23), the church of Jesus Christ. The next verse confirms this, *“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power...”* It is through His people that God has chosen that our Lord would rule in the midst of His enemies. It is through us that He has chosen to *“send the rod of His strength.”* We are invited to *“reign with Him.”*

If it were so, and the world could be convinced, that everyone who *“repeated a prayer”* and *“joined the church”* would suddenly have tremendous wealth and power bestowed upon them, the entire world would stand in line to *“receive Jesus.”* If it were so that a *“child of God”* were still a *“sinner,”* and yet would possess endless supernatural power to do the miraculous, even the Witches and Satanists would *“come to Jesus.”* Isn't it also a shame that so much of the *“church”* today is seeking to persuade the *“world”* of these very things? Remember that *“Simon the Sorcerer”* offered a large sum of money to Peter if he could but receive miraculous power (Acts 8:18-21). Remember also that Peter told him, *“Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”* The truth is, there is something that stands between every man and the promise of God and that is the *“death of the cross”* and the *“reproach of Christ.”*

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:13-14

Jesus told us to enter at the *“strait”* gate. The Greek word translated *“strait,”* means *“narrow, (from obstacles standing close about).”* Among the *“obstacles”* at the gate, which keep the multitudes from entering, are the *“stone of stumbling”* and the *“rock of offence,”* which Peter tells us is Christ (I Peter 2:68). There is also the *“preaching of the cross,”* which, as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 1:18, is *“foolishness to them which perish.”* Then there is *“Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greek foolishness (I Corinthians 1:23).”* These are the things at the *“strait gate”* that keep multitudes from entering into *“eternal life.”* The *“strait gate”* itself is the *“death of the cross.”* All who enter through that gate die with Jesus. They *“suffer”* the cross of Christ. All these things are finished at Calvary where Jesus died for us, but they must be *“submitted to (Romans 10:3)”* by all who would enter into life. Jesus said there are *“few”* who find this gate that leads to life. Who would believe that the *“gate”* that enters into *“eternal life”* would be seen so clearly to be *“death”* to all who enter? The entrance to *“life”* is through *“death”* with Christ.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Proverbs 14: 12

There is another gate that Jesus said, “*many there be that go in thereat.*” It is a wide gate, highly advertised, and very appealing to the eye. Among the advertisements are those which give the promise of “*prosperity,*” “*worldly fame,*” “*political power,*” “*excitement,*” “*entertaining worship,*” and “*heaven at the end.*” The gate itself is clearly labeled “*life,*” but those who enter at that gate find out too late that it is the “*way of death.*” The “*promoters*” of the “*wide*” gate and “*broad*” way have found a place in the modern church. Peter warned us of these in this last day and described them to us in detail in his epistle. Read the entire second chapter of II Peter, and pay close attention to II Peter 2:2, “*And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*” The Greek word translated “*pernicious ways*” literally means “*ways of destruction and damnation.*” While these teachers speak of “*eternal life*” and “*prosperity,*” their “*way*” is actually “*the way that leadeth to destruction*” that Jesus warned us against.

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

II Timothy 2:11-13

Just as death with Christ is the entrance into life with Christ, so “*suffering with Christ*” is the entrance into “*reigning with Christ.*” Paul tells us in Romans 8:17 that we are “*...joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*”

Bearing the Reproach of Christ

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Hebrews 13:12-13

Based upon the commands of the Law of Moses, the “*camp*” of Israel was to be ceremonially “*clean*” and “*holy*” at all times. For that reason there were a number of things that were not allowed inside the “*camp,*” or, in later times, the city of Jerusalem. Nothing unclean or defiled was permitted inside the camp. A person with “*leprosy*” or any “*uncleanness*” was forced to live “*outside the camp.*” The bodies of the animals, whose blood was offered for sin, were to be burned “*outside the camp.*” Any criminal, or person who “*despised*” the Law of Moses was stoned to death “*outside the camp.*” When Jesus was crucified, He was led outside the gates of Jerusalem, where He was executed like a common criminal, condemned by the High Priest as a “*blasphemer.*” The High Priest did not understand that Jesus was, in fact, the “*sinless*” Lamb of God, whose sacrifice “*took away the sin of the world.*” In the eyes of man, Jesus died in shame and disgrace. He was, in their sight, an offence and reproach. They could not see that even in His suffering, He was victorious. Through His death, He “*destroyed he that had the power of death, that is the devil* (Hebrews 2:14);” He “*...spoiled principalities and powers...(Colossians 2:13-15);*” and, He also reconciled us unto God (Colossians 1:21-22). On His cross, He crucified our “*old man,*” and destroyed the “*body of sin* (Romans 6:6).” With His shed blood, He “*redeemed us*” (Ephesians 1:7) and “*sanctified us*” (Hebrews 10:10, 13:12), yet all that man could see was His offence and reproach. In that He “*suffered outside the gate*” for our redemption and sanctification, we are told to “*...go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.*”

For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

Psalms 69: 9

We who are “redeemed” and “sanctified” by His blood; we who are “baptized into His death,” and “crucified with Him;” we are “joined to the Lord,” made “one” with Him; the “reproaches of them that reproached (Him)” will fall upon us. If we “...go forth...unto Him outside the camp,” we will be “driven” outside the camp by those who reject Him. Those who hated Him will hate us also. Those who rejected Him will reject us. If they persecuted Him, they will also persecute us. The “offence of the cross” has not ceased (Galatians 5:11).

Jesus Christ is still reproached by all those who love this present world. God is asking of us, “will you bear His reproach; will you suffer with Him, outside the camp?” Those who do will also “reign with Him.”

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Hebrews 11:24-26

Briefly we consider Moses, who chose to “suffer affliction with the people of God,” rather than to “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” You may think this was a grievous thing to young Moses to leave the splendor of Pharaoh's palace, and all the amenities that went with being the “son of Pharaoh's daughter,” to live the life of a shepherd in the backside of the wilderness. It wasn't. Moses had an attitude that “...esteemed the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” A person may refuse to suffer the reproach of Christ and seek their place among the wise of this world. The foolishness of God is greater than the wisdom of man (I Corinthians 1:25). You may seek power and dominion in the way of the world, but the “weakness of God is greater than the strength of man.” If you, on the other hand, would have the “wisdom of God,” you will become a “fool for Christ sake (I Corinthians 4:10-14).” If you would have “power with God,” you must be “weak” in your own human spirit (Matthew 5:3). Moses chose to “suffer” with the righteous, but it was this same Moses that God chose to rule and reign with Him, over the same world that Moses had refused to be a part of. Choosing to suffer the “reproach of Christ” is the gateway to the kingdom of God where we “reign in life (Romans 5:17)” through Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

There is great joy set before you. It makes no difference who you are or what you have been. Many who read this message are sitting in a prison cell because of their own ways, which were not good, yet God has set something wonderful before you. You may be a prisoner to drugs, alcohol, pornography, etc. It does not matter what your present condition, God has approached to you with a great treasure. You are invited to come to Him, to be with Him, to be like Him, to be a joint heir with His Son Jesus, and to possess the “unsearchable riches of Christ.” This is the “Joy” that is set before you. The only thing between you and this great treasure that God has set before you is the “cross of Christ.” It is the place of “death.” It is death to the sin in the sinner. It is death to the prisoner of drugs, alcohol, etc. It is death to the old nature that has led you astray and destroyed you for a lifetime. It is also the entrance to “life, and that more abundantly,” that is, to “eternal life.” It is also the entrance to complete victory over sin and Satan. It is the place where man becomes “one” with God.”

Death is never an appealing thing to the one sentenced to die. The death of the cross was the thing that stood between Jesus and the “Joy” that was set before Him. The scripture said it was for that “Joy” that was set before Him that He “endured the cross” and “despised the shame.” He chose to suffer the cross, and today He

is seated at the right hand of His Father in Heaven. He rules and reigns from Heaven with all those who have, in this life, *“endured the cross”* with Him. Right now you can repent of your sin and of what you are (*“God, be merciful to me, a sinner...”* Luke 18:10-14). Believe that Jesus, the Son of God, died to save you from your sin. Put your trust in Him, surrender your soul and body to Him, and you will be *“born again”* of the Spirit of God. You will know it is so. You will be made *“free from sin”* to serve God in righteousness and true holiness. You will be a child of God.

To the Child of God

You are invited to rule and reign with Christ in this present world. Please understand, I am not speaking about *“political power,” “material prosperity,”* or even *“Christian activism.”* I am speaking about, as Paul said in Colossians 1:26-27, *“...the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints. ...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”* If you are one who, as Moses, *“...esteems the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of this present world,”* then it will please God to *“reveal His Son in you.”* You must be *“filled with the Spirit,”* that is, *“baptized with the Holy Ghost.”* If we the children of God will, as God has said, *“humble ourselves, and pray, and seek His face, and turn from our own way (II Chronicles 7: 14),”* He will hear from Heaven. If we will *“turn to Him with all our heart, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning (Joel 2:12),”* and *“weep between the porch and the altar,”* saying, as God commanded, *“Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? (Joel 2:17):”* if we will do these things, He has promised to drive the enemy out of our land (Joel 2:20). God will pour out His Spirit (Joel 2:28-32). We will be the vessels of His choosing, to *“reign”* with Him over sickness, disease, and over every unclean spirit that has invaded the church and also our nation.

The *“church”* has tried to heal our nation through human means. Just yesterday, as I write this, I received a telephone call from an organization that I respect for their goals and efforts. I was asked to give a two hundred dollar offering to help them *“petition”* the supreme court of our land in the matter of *“abortion.”* We recognize that our nation is filled with *“abominations,”* but the *“Supreme Court”* is not the answer. If we had wept in the altars of God, petitioning Almighty God to heal our land, then abortion, perversion, paganism, etc, would be no more than a bad memory in America. The curse of the sixties and seventies would have long ago been broken off of America.

For almost two years we have sought God for America. I believe the Lord told me on January 20, 2001, that we had three and a half years to affect America for Jesus Christ. Less than two years remain. At the same time, I was told in a vision to *“command”* His people in the name of Jesus to *“receive the Holy Ghost,”* and since that time we have seen God pour out His Spirit in *“measure.”* We yet seek His Spirit *“without measure (John 3:34).”* We have seen the Lord heal the sick and do great miracles. We have seen unclean spirits cast out of people who were hopelessly bound. I have seen the greatest manifestation of the Lord that I have seen in almost forty years of ministry, yet I know that our minds have not as yet fully comprehended the *“riches of the glory”* that He has set before us.

America had been held hostage for twenty-two days by the recent snipers. I saw chief Moose of the Montgomery County, Maryland, police department being ridiculed at a press conference because of his *“politeness.”* I heard as Chief Moose gave honor to his parents for the way they raised him. I was amazed at the overwhelming compassion that flooded me as this good man suffered ridicule, yet kept his integrity. The Spirit of the Lord spoke to me, *“It's time for this to end.”* That night at our Wednesday night service I preached on the *“Invitation to Reign With Christ.”* At the close of the message I related what I had experienced earlier. I told the people, *“It's time for this (sniper killings) to end.”* The congregation gathered to the altar, stood with hands uplifted, calling on the name of the Lord, and *“commanded”* the power of Satan to be broken that was working through the snipers. Imagine our joy when we awoke the next morning, and heard the news that it was over, the snipers were in jail. I later found that God had spoken to other men of God the same night to do the same. God's

people, who heard His voice, *“reigned with Christ”* in the midst of His enemies that night. It was only a show of greater things to come if we will seek His face.

Many years ago, in a time of fasting and prayer, I was caught up in the Spirit one night and saw a vision from the Lord. He said, *“come up hither, and I will show you the New Jerusalem, the city of God.”* I thought that I would see the same things the Apostle John saw in Revelation 21:9-27, and I did. Instead of seeing the walls, streets and buildings of a city, however, I saw a vast multitude of people. In John's vision, an angel had told him, *“come hither, and I will show you the Bride, the Lamb's wife.”* John saw the city: I saw the people. John said the city had *“the glory of God.”* I saw the people of God with the glory of God upon them. To simply say it was *“glorious”* is insufficient, but it was *“glorious.”* While I saw no individual manifestations of this people, I knew that unclean spirits, demons and devils, fled before them. Their *“conversation”* was the Word of God, though it was not simply *“quoting scriptures.”* At their word, sickness and disease fled away. No power of the enemy could stand before them. The name of the Lord was upon them, and all they did, they did in His name. They were the Bride of Christ: they were *“one”* with Him. As the vision lifted, and I came out of the Spirit, I was weeping, crying, *“I must be one of them, . . . I must be one of them.”* Today, in these hours just before the return of Jesus, there will be such a people, a holy and glorious church that He will present to Himself, and the cry of my heart, the passion of my whole being is, *“I must be one of them.”* That is the invitation! It is the *“joy”* that is set before every child of God. A call to *“draw nigh”* to *“come near.”* It is a *“holy calling”* to abandon yourself to God Almighty, that His Son would be revealed in you; to surrender your body and members to Him, holy and acceptable, which is your *“reasonable service.”* He will walk this earth one more time in His people. He will speak to this present evil world one more time through His people. It will not be us; it will be Christ in us. This is what we are called to. It is God's eternal purpose for us.