

MORE THAN AN INVITATION

MARK 1:14-15 • TV216A

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“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

I would like for you very much to listen most carefully to my message today. I believe the message will be considered a little controversial, maybe to some people, very controversial.

I’m going to speak on this subject and I want you to listen carefully and reserve your comments or opinion until I have completed the message. Here is the title: **“MORE THAN AN INVITATION.”** This is what I am speaking on; **“MORE THAN AN INVITATION.”**

My text is taken from the book of **Mark chapter 1: verse 14**. Listen carefully: *“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the Gospel.”*

We hear a lot of talk today about the Gospel invitation. You hear that on every hand, the Gospel invitation. We hear a lot about inviting men to believe God and inviting men to receive Christ.

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I strongly suggest, very strongly, and I declare unto you that the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord is more, much more, than an invitation. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a command. This is what I am talking about and I want you to listen.

If you are a preacher this may change your whole ministry. If you are a teacher, a Sunday school teacher, if you are trying to be a soul-winner, whatever you may be in the kingdom of God, it may change your whole attitude and outlook, certainly your methods.

I am saying that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is more than an invitation; it is a command. We are not invited to repent; we are commanded to repent. Listen to these Scriptures: In **Acts 17:30**, listen to this; *“God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”*

Now, do words mean anything at all? God doesn't invite men to repent; He does not suggest that men repent; it says, *“God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent.”*

We are not invited to believe God; we are commanded to believe God. The Scripture says, *“He that believeth not shall be damned.”* We are not invited to believe God.

The apostle didn't suggest that you ought to believe God's Word; you should believe God. Don't refuse to believe God. The apostles declared *“He that believeth not shall be damned. He that believeth not hath made God a liar.”*

We are not invited to love God and to love one another. The Lord Jesus Christ said, *“This is my commandment that you love one another.”* This is a commandment of God; it is not an invitation.

Actually, my friend, and I have received a lot of static through the years on this subject, the word invitation is not in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation; it is not even there one time. The word invite is not in the Bible. I challenge you to find the word invitation or the word invite in God's Word anywhere in the 66 Books. It does not appear one time.

Now, the word *“invited”* (past-tense), appears three times but it never refers to God. Three times, the word *“invited”* appears in the Bible. Once it appears in **1 Samuel 9:24** and Samuel the prophet told King Saul that he had prepared a meal and invited the people to share it.

In **2 Samuel 13**, Absalom said “he invited the king's sons to eat with him.” Absalom invited his brothers and half brothers to come and eat with him.

In **Ester chapter 5:12**, Haman said *“he'd been invited by the queen to appear before her.”* Do you see what I am saying? The word invitation is not in the Bible. The word invites is not in the Bible and the word invited is there three times but never refers to any spiritual blessing extended to men from the hand of God.

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Before you get angry, let me say this; we may invite men to hear us preach; we may persuade men to look to Christ. Paul said that; he said, *“I persuade men, knowing the terror of the Lord I persuade men.”*

We, (you and I, frail creatures) may beseech men to be reconciled to God. But, the King of kings and Lord of lords never, merely, invites men to believe His Word; He commands them to believe His Word.

That is not even characteristic of a king to invite men, to give credit to his word. The Lord of the universe does not merely invite His subjects to obey Him; He commands them to obey Him. The Sovereign Lord does not invite men to bow to Christ; He commands them to bow to Christ.

He said in **Philippians chapter 2**; *“God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God.”* That is not an invitation; that is a commandment.

Now, the Scriptures that we call invitations; I want you to listen carefully to it, what I am saying is that the Gospel is a whole lot more than an invitation. It is a whole lot more than going out here and begging people to repent. It is a whole lot more than begging people to give God a chance and begging people to let God have His way.

He is the *“King of King and Lord of Lords.”* He does not beg sinners. He does not negotiate with criminals. He commands men.

The Scriptures that we call invitations are more than invitations. You listen to **Isaiah 45**. Someone might say, “Well preacher, it says in **Isaiah 45:22**, *‘look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else;’* is that not an invitation?”

In a sense it may be, but rather it is a commandment. It is more than an invitation; it is a direction. Look at **verse 20**. This is what the Lord says in **verse 20 of Isaiah 45**; *“people are foolish and ignorant who look to idols and false gods and pray to a god that cannot save.”*

He said that they were ignorant; people are ignorant who look to false gods, statues, and idols and false gods that cannot hear and cannot save. He says, *“Look to me; I am God; look to me and be ye saved; I am God for there is none else.”*

That is not a plea that is a direction. He is saying that these people who look to a false god are foolish. Christ is saying, “If you want to be saved, you look to me because I am the only true and living God.” That is a direction and it is a commandment too. Christ says *“look to me and be ye saved.”*

You might say, “what about **Matthew 11:28** where it says; *“come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden; I will give you rest.”* Did you ever take the trouble to read **verse 27**? It does go with **verse 28**.

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Matthew 11:27; now listen to the Lord Jesus, He says in **verse 27**; *“all things are delivered unto me of My Father. No man knoweth the Son but the Father and no man knoweth the Father but the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. You come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden; I will give you rest.”*

That is a direction; that is turning your eyes in the right direction. That is turning your eyes upon the right person. “I know the Father. I reveal the Father. I have the power to give rest. I have the power to give peace. You come to Me.” That is still a commandment. *“You come unto me and I will give you rest.”*

If you will take the time to examine all the other so-called invitations, you will find that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is more than an invitation; it is a command. As our Lord said, *“repent ye and believe the Gospel.”*

I will tell you this; to believe God is to reap great blessings and benefits, *“for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

Benefits come from believing God and what blessings come from believing God. What rich mercies come from believing God; believe God. *“He that believeth on the Son hath life. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life.”*

To refuse to believe God is to incur great sin. John said, *“If we receive not the witness of God which he hath testified of His Son, we make God a liar.”* That is a serious charge. A man who does not believe the Word of God makes God a liar. He is putting a question mark on the record that God gave concerning His Son.

My friend, to deny the Gospel is to be forever damned. Our Lord said, *“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to everyone creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.”*

Do you see how serious it is? To believe God is to receive great benefits and blessings. To refuse to believe God is to incur great sin and we make God a liar. To refuse to believe the Gospel is to be forever damned.

The Gospel is more than just an invitation it is a commandment. It is a command from the throne of a Sovereign God. What I am saying is this and I am going to give you three things to think about:

First of all: We are not faced with a choice.

I hear people talking about our choice to believe or not believe. I beg your pardon; we are not faced with a choice; we are faced with a commandment. Listen to this Scripture in **1 John 5:9**; *“if we receive the witness of men,”* and we do, we believe the word of men.

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You go see your doctor and your doctor says that you have a certain problem. He writes down a prescription and hands it to you. You believe him and you believe what he wrote down. You go to the druggist and he fills the prescription. He hands it to you and you swallow it; you believe the witness of men.

If you believe the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. This is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son; *“he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. He that believeth not God hath made God a liar because he believes not the record that God hath given concerning His Son”* (1 John 5:10).

“This is the record that God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11). I am saying that it is not optional whether you repent or don't repent. You are commanded to repent. *“God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent.”*

You have no option. It is not optional for you to believe God or not to believe God to give credit to His Word or to doubt His Word. It is commanded that you believe God.

Let me ask you some questions:

How many of you parents out there invite your children to believe you? You may come in and say, “son; I want you to go upstairs and get your clothes together. We are going to get into the car and go down to Grandmother's house and spend the night.”

Do you invite your son to believe you or do you expect him to believe you. Do you command him to believe you? Do you invite your son to obey you or do you command him to do so?

When you tell that son to go upstairs and get his clothes and come downstairs and get into the car; is that an invitation or is that a commandment?

Do you mean to tell me that the heavenly Father simply invites men to believe Him, to give credit to His Word, and you being evil, expect people to believe you and expect your children to obey your word?

How many policemen out there invite you to obey the law? You don't see any signs along the highway saying, “We invite you to go 55 mph; we invite you not to do this, that, and the other.” No sir; these are commandments!

How many generals do you suppose would last in an army if they stood in front of their troops and said, “We invite you men to charge into battle; we invite you to get into your airplanes, take off, and fight for your country? This is just a suggestion, you really don't have to; it is optional. You can obey our word or you don't have to obey it.”

That is foolishness! Yet, we talk about the living Lord of glory who gave His only begotten Son to redeem a people. He has purposed a populated heaven with a new people like Christ, and He is simply out here inviting rebels to obey Him?

He is inviting His subjects to believe Him? He is inviting men to give credit to His Word? That is a pack of foolishness! It's not optional whether or not you believe God.

My friend, it is not optional whether or not you bow to Christ. Peter said on Pentecost, "*God hath made that same Jesus whom you have crucified, God made Him Lord and Christ.*"

They said, "*What are we going to do? We have crucified the Lord of glory?*" He said, "*repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin.*" That is no invitation that is a commandment.

Abel wasn't invited to bring a blood offering, he was commanded to bring a blood offering. It wasn't optional whether or not he came to God with a blood sacrifice or like Cain came; that was the only way. God had respect to Abel and his offering because it was the one that God commanded.

Noah wasn't invited to build an ark; he was commanded to build an ark. I will tell you this; he wasn't invited to enter the ark; he was told to enter the ark. Listen to the Scripture in **Genesis chapter 7**.

When the ark was completed and the flood was approaching, God said; "*Noah, come into the ark.*" Listen to the next verse, **verse 16**; "*so they went in as God commanded.*" Huh? They went in as God suggested or invited, pled with them, or begged them?

God doesn't beg; God is no beggar, not the God of the Bible, not the God of the universe. They went in as God commanded. Noah was commanded to enter into that ark.

Israel was not invited to kill a Passover lamb; they were commanded. On the first day of the month, upon the certain month, you shall do this; you shall put the blood on the door; you shall go in your houses and close the door. You shall wait under the blood and "*when I see the blood; I will pass over you.*"

That was God's commandment. Failure to obey or respond to the commandment of God brought death and condemnation.

Moses wasn't invited to build a tabernacle; he was commanded to build a tabernacle. Aaron and the high priest were not invited to offer atonement; they were commanded to bring atonement.

I will tell you this; our generation has been thrown a curve; they have been hood-winked; they've been conned; they've been misled by phony, false prophets and preachers so long, that they have swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. They support men in their error.

It is more than an invitation. They talk about the Gospel-invitation. I will tell you this; it is a Gospel commandment; it is a commandment. You and I are faced with a lot more than a mere

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invitation; we are faced with the Word of God which commands us to repent and believe the Gospel.

To fail to obey the commandment of God is to incur the eternal condemnation and wrath of a infinite and unchangeable God.

Let me ask you some questions:

Why is the Gospel a command and more than an invitation? Why is it a command and more than an invitation?

First of all: It is a command in that it is according to God's character as a Sovereign King.

Now listen; a righteous judge does not negotiate with a criminal. If you have a judge sitting on his bench and he has authority of the law with him and behind him and he is expected to act in justice and righteousness, you don't find him negotiating with criminals, he says; "I will tell you what you do."

Suppose a judge is talking to a criminal in front of his bench and says, "I am going to do this if you will meet me half way." A judge doesn't talk that way at all; he says, "I will tell you what we are going to do; you are going to serve ten years and if you behave yourself I will let you off at the end of five years. If you don't do so and so, you will serve the ten years."

Do you see what the judge is saying? The judge is not negotiating with that criminal. He is handing down his ruling. A great master does not beg slaves to obey him. A mighty king does not bargain with his subjects.

A holy God does not suggest sinners repent and believe the Gospel and walk before Him in holiness. He doesn't suggest it at all. He does not invite them to, He commands it.

I will tell you this; you come with me to Sinai's mountain when the nation of Israel stood out in front of that mountain while God spoke. That mountain flashed with lightening, thunder, and smoke. The awesome, awful, presence of God was manifested there.

Israel backed away from that mountain. I don't find God saying, "I have ten suggestions for you gentlemen that I wish to present to you and invite you to hear My Word." He said, "*These are my commandments, walk before men in holiness and live; disobey my Word and die.*" That is a commandment!

That is the only way God speaks to fallen men. He speaks with authority. He speaks by way of commandment. I'm telling you the truth; the Gospel is not an invitation only it is a commandment in keeping with the character of a holy God.

When you talk about it being anything else you compromise the character of God. What you are really doing is you are revealing the character of your god and He is less than the God of the Bible.

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He has no authority to command men. *“Thou thoughtest thou was altogether such as one as thyself.”*

I will tell you something else about the Gospel being a commandment: The Gospel being a command gives boldness to God’s ambassadors.

Listen to Christ when He sent His disciples out to preach. In **Matthew 28:18** He said, *“all authority, (the crucified, risen, redeemer, who is talking); all authority, power, is given unto me in heaven and in earth. I’m talking about all authority and all power, all power over all flesh. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations; I’ve got all authority.”*

We don’t go forth apologizing for God. We don’t go forth begging men “to let go and let God.” We don’t go forth begging people to “let Jesus have His way.”

My friends; a true ambassador of the Son of God goes forth into this world declaring the crown-rights of King Jesus which He has by decree and design, that which He purchased in His death. We go forth crying what the Psalmist cried in **Psalms 2**; *“kiss the Son lest he be angry.”*

If some preachers of this day would get a hold of the truth of the Gospel and the character of God and the need of sinners and the crown-rights of Christ, we would have less mealy-mouth, pussy-footing preachers. We would have some men standing, preaching with boldness and authority.

If men would preach fearlessly instead of occupying a vocation, a profession, earning a living, or drawing their salaries, and be less scared to death that they will be fired, and pleasing men. They would go forth and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is, a command. That’s exactly right! You know that I am telling you the truth!

Thirdly: The Gospel comes as a command to encourage humble seekers to hope for mercy.

Listen carefully to this; I am saying that the Gospel is more than an invitation; it is a command in keeping with the character of God. Also, the Gospel gives His ambassadors the courage and boldness which they must have and to encourage the humble seeker.

Listen to me; if I am commanded to believe on Christ, then I may; that’s right, I can. If I am commanded to believe on Christ, if I am commanded by God to come to Christ and find in Him full pardon and full forgiveness, then I am at perfect liberty to do so. Do you see what I am saying, if I’m commanded to?

If a daddy tells a son, “son; take that box and get some firewood.” Does the son say, “May I do that father?” It’s not “may I do it; I told you to do it.”

With the commandment comes permission, not only permission, but power. Listen to the Lord as He stands outside the grave of Lazarus and says; *“Lazarus, come forth.”* Is that an invitation? That is a command. With the command of the King comes permission and power.

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Listen to Christ tell the man on the bed with the 38 years of being sick with palsy. He could not walk. Our Lord said; *“take up your bed and walk.”* Is that an invitation or is that a command? You know it is a command. With those commands come permission and power.

Listen to Christ tell the man with the withered hand; *“stretch out your hand; do it.”* You might say that he couldn't but he did because his Lord commanded him to. With the command came the power and the permission.

Does this sound like invitations? I am telling you that God expects men to believe and God commands men to believe. I go forth with the same message. When I preach the Gospel, I expect you to believe and I command you to believe. In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to believe God's Word.

What is the obedience that is required in the Gospel? There are three or four things and then I close:

First of all: You are to hear God's Word.

God said; *“This is my beloved Son; hear Him.”* Is that an invitation? *“Hear Him;”* that is the Father speaking from heaven. “I suggest if I may be so bold, that you listen to My Son.

If you don't have anything better to do; I invite you.” This is not God, (your god maybe), but not the God of the Bible. *“This is my Son; hear ye Him.”* Ezekiel said, *“O ye dry bones; hear the Word of the Lord.”* Our God said, *“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*

You are commanded to hear God's Word and you are commanded to repent. Lay down your arms, put up your shotgun and bow to Christ; that is God's commandment.

You are commanded to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You are commanded to confess Christ publically. You are commanded of God to love one another.

You are commanded of God to walk in holiness and obedience on this earth to bring glory and praise to His name. He said, *“As your heavenly Father is holy; be ye holy.”* As your heavenly Father is merciful; *“be ye merciful.”*

I told you before I started this message that I had a controversial message. I want you to do this; I want you to give as much time to the consideration of this message as I have given to the preparation of it and that is a long time.

You give it some thoughts and see if I am not telling you the truth. *“God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”* God commands all men everywhere to believe His Gospel; *“repent and believe the Gospel.”* That is what our Lord said.