

Luke 14 (Part 1): 1-24 • Sabbath healing and Parable of the Great Banquet

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Luke chapter 14. As we continue our study here on Sunday morning through the New Testament, Luke chapter 14. Okay, we're going to begin reading here in verse 1. Follow along as I do. It says:

“One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.² And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.³ And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”⁴ But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away.⁵ And he said to them, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?”⁶ And they could not reply to these things.

⁷ Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸ “When you are invited (to someone or) by someone (rather) to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him,⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

¹² He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

¹⁵ When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”¹⁶ But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.¹⁷ And at

the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' ¹⁹ And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' ²⁰ And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' ²¹ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' ²² And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' ²³ And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.''" (ESV)

Let's stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word that we're digging into today. As we do, Lord, we pray that You'd help us to gain a heart of understanding from it and also know, Lord, how to apply these things to our lives. Thank You, Father, for giving us the Scriptures. We ask that You would use these things today to feed our hearts and souls, to equip us to be the people that You've called us to be. We ask it in Jesus' precious name, amen.

What we're covering in these first 24 verses of the chapter, I'm going to put up on the screen for you so you can see an outline of what we're dealing with.

- Healing on the Sabbath (again!)
- Jesus speaks on self-advancement
- Kingdom generosity
- Parable of the wedding banquet

First of all, once again, Jesus heals somebody on the Sabbath, and it happens a lot. He then speaks on the subject of self-advancement. He mentions what it is to be generous in the Kingdom of God. Then He gives this parable of the wedding banquet and the guests who were invited but made lame excuses so as not to come.

As we get into the first few verses of this chapter and look at this section where Jesus is invited into the home of a Pharisee, I'm always impressed by Jesus. He's got to know these guys have it out for Him. I mean, the Pharisees were gunning for Him, looking for opportunities to criticize Him and hoping He would say or do something wrong in their estimation. And yet, He continued to go to dinner with these people.

I mean, I would have said, thanks, but no thanks, but here's Jesus. It had to be very challenging, and you have to know that this invitation was probably not a genuine desire to meet with Jesus. We're told here in the very first verse that they were watching Him closely.

And then we're told in verse 2 that Jesus notices a man in the room who has dropsy. That's, by the way, an old term for what we call edema today, which is a swelling of the body because of taking of fluid for whatever reasons. It's painful and difficult to deal with.

And here's this man that Jesus notices who has this issue, and he was probably planted in the room by the Pharisees to see what Jesus would do. Noticing the man, you'll notice that Jesus then goes on to ask a question.

And I find it interesting in verse 3—note it, look here in your Bible—it says, *“And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees...”* That's an interesting statement because I don't remember them saying anything, but it says He responded to them, which gives us the idea that Jesus recognized this as a plant.

They put this man in there to see what He would do on the Sabbath, and He begins to talk to them by the way of asking a question, saying, *“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”*

Some of you might be wondering if we're actually doing a passage we've done earlier in Luke, because it seems like He keeps encountering this situation with healing on the Sabbath. This is one of several times that this has happened. The repetition of this subject alone really underscores how challenging it was for people of that day—and it's still a challenging subject.

I repeatedly get emails and questions from people asking about the Sabbath and what their relationship to the Sabbath ought to be so, it obviously remains a very challenging topic for people. As far as the Jews were concerned, we know they added a lot of regulations to the simple command God gave in the Old Testament to keep the Sabbath by resting from their work or their labor.

The Jews added all these sorts of things, and they became traditions. And traditions, as you well know, can easily become something we are very passionate about maintaining. Some of you may come from church backgrounds where tradition played a huge part in the things you did. We've all learned over the years that one of the dumbest reasons for doing something is simply because we've always done it that way.

But the interesting thing about people who get locked into traditions—and I'm not saying traditions are bad necessarily—I mean when we elevate them like the Jews did, to the place of God's Word, that's a problem.

I've noticed that, as it relates to traditions, people don't think about why they do things necessarily. Not well, I shouldn't say that no one does; I think a lot of people don't even think about it. Traditions just become like a knee-jerk reaction: We do it because we do it; we do it because we've always done it that way. And we will defend our right or what we're doing in these traditions without really even knowing why we do them.

And Jesus is asking a question here: *"Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or not?"* He asks this to prompt the Pharisees to start thinking, *"Why do you believe the way you do?"* This is an incredibly important question for people who are into tradition, because traditions can stop us, dead in our tracks, from moving forward with God because it doesn't match with our expectations.

I remember hearing about someone who walked into a sanctuary or an auditorium like this and immediately, after walking in the door was like, well, this isn't a church; there's no stained glass. There's no organ. Where's the pipe organ? It isn't a church if there isn't a pipe organ. And where's this, and where's that? All the kind of the accouterments that go along with the traditional things that we recognize or tend to think this is what makes up a church. And that's what tradition does to us.

So Jesus asked this question: *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"* The reason Jesus wants them to think this through, is because if they would, if they would just take time to think out about the question—*"Is it lawful to do good?"* *"Is it lawful to heal?"*—He could get them to start thinking about the fact that their observance of the Sabbath has begun to become a contradiction in the heart of God, who cares about people.

But you see, the rules the Jews had imposed on their Sabbath observance began to do actually the opposite: they began to keep the rules but stopped caring about people. And whenever that happens—and by the way, that always happens with legalism—it always elevates rules over people.

God elevates people over rules. It's just a good way to remember things, okay. If you're keeping a rule that's elevated above compassion, then you need to rethink that rule. And I'm not talking about morality here. We need to maintain a balance between proper morality and loving people. I'm not saying that we should cast away morality in order to love people; there needs to be a balance. Jesus showed us that balance during His life.

But you'll notice that the response of the religious leaders is very telling in verse 4. It says, *"But they remained silent."* They didn't have anything to say because there really isn't anything they could say. If they were going to defend their observance of the Sabbath, they were going to look like real jerks because here stands this man with edema, and he's in obvious pain and needs to be given some relief from this thing. For them to sit there and argue the finer points of doctrine while this man stands there suffering, they're going to look like real jerks.

But on the other hand, if they're going to argue for the Sabbath-keeping regulations that the Jews had foisted upon the original command of God, then they're going to seem like they're violating the accepted standards of what it was proper to do and not to do on the Sabbath. So I want you to see what Jesus does in response to their silence because He could go on arguing—you know that. He could have gone on just arguing the situation and so forth.

But I want you to notice in the last part of verse 4 what He does do. It says, *"...Then he took him and healed him and sent him away."* I like that.

Because remember, just a moment ago, we talked about the fact that legalism exalts rule-keeping above people, right? Above compassion. So, yeah, Jesus could have kept arguing the finer doctrinal points of what it means to obey the Sabbath. But then again, that would have been violating compassion too, because here stands this man who needs to be healed, he needs to be touched.

And so rather than just simply prove His point in an ongoing sort of way, it says here that He just turns to the man, heals him in front of them all, right? And then sends him away and says, go home.

And then once the man is gone, now Jesus can continue the conversation. Look at verse 5 with me. He goes on to them and asks them another question: *"Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, won't go get him out?"*

Can you imagine the stupidity of such a situation? Your child falls down the well or into a deep hole, and you hear him crying, and you walk over there and say, I'm really sorry, son, but it's the Sabbath. You're going to have to wait until dark when the Sabbath is over, and then I can get you up. Jesus is saying there's no father in the world that would do that to his own child. In fact, you wouldn't even do it to your animal. If your dog or your goat or your cow or whatever fell into a hole, you'd help the thing out—of course, you would.

The point is, here stands a man on the Sabbath who needs help. He needs a hand up, and I'm not going to ignore him. You wouldn't ignore your children; I'm not going to ignore mine. And, of course, we see in verse 6, once again, their

response was silence. They couldn't reply because they knew that Jesus was right. Of course, they would have helped their child out of a well or a hole or something on the Sabbath. Do you see what's going on here? And this is another fine point of legalism.

Legalism creates rules that contradict their very actions in life. These guys would have clearly gone to help somebody, including a family member, if they needed help on the Sabbath, yet they were demanding that Jesus not do that.

There's a contradiction in the way they are doing this. And Jesus—I love how He just heals the man and sends him on his way. Instead of the Pharisees gaining the evidence they wanted to use against Him, Jesus is the one who presented evidence at that dinner table. He gave them evidence that He has the power and authority over sickness and infirmity, and the wisdom to see God's Word as it was really meant to be given.

Then we move on here in verse 7, and Jesus uses what's happening there at that dinner for another teachable moment. We're told in verse 7 that *“He told a parable to those who had been invited when He noticed how they were jockeying for position for the places of honor.”*

Now, you've got to just know that in the culture we're reading about here, it was a symbol of your importance as to where you sat at the dinner table. That's not one of the symbols of importance for you and I—we don't care—but for them, it was huge, and it spoke volumes about your position in society based on where you got seated at a dinner party in relation to the host.

The people who were seated closest to the host were considered the VIPs of the dinner, right? And everybody else down the line was in a lesser position of importance. So, as the guests are arriving in front of Jesus, they're all moving around trying to get the best spot and so forth.

And Jesus sees this, so He begins to speak to them about this whole issue of self-promotion. And, frankly, there's really nothing new about this. What Jesus is saying to the people there that day has already been covered in the Old Testament. There are some wonderful passages. Let me show you a couple, first from Proverbs chapter 25 on the screen. Look at this:

Proverbs 25:6-7 (ESV)

Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, “Come up here,” than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

Do not put yourself forward in the King's presence or stand in the place of the great (In other words, don't presume to take a position of standing alongside those who are great) for (it goes on to say,) it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble. Or in the presence of anyone, for that matter.

And then Proverbs 27:2 goes on to say this:

Proverbs 27:2 (ESV)

Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

In other words, don't promote yourself. That's the whole idea behind it. And this is a fairly needed exhortation today, as much as it was back then, because people haven't changed.

We still need to be recognized and valued just as much as the people in Jesus's day, and we've just discovered all kinds of new ways to promote ourselves in the eyes of others, like taking that one good picture we took in the last 10 years and making that our profile picture on Facebook.

Have you ever noticed that people's Facebook pictures rarely look like them? I have. It's like the camera was very kind that day, and that's the one we're going to put there. That's the way I promote myself. That's the way I want people to see me.

There are all kinds of ways we do that today. And I'm not suggesting that if you're up for a job and you're applying for it, you shouldn't send in your resume and let your prospective boss know that you're capable of doing the job and that sort of thing.

What Jesus is talking about is an attitude of self-promotion that becomes a focal point of our lives to the degree that I care so much about what other people think. I'm always trying to jockey for position in the minds of other people so that they'll think I'm something better than what I really am. It literally becomes an obsessive, consuming idea of how I live my life.

And what that basically means is I start caring so much about what you think that I pretty much lose sight of what God thinks of me because I'm now living my life to impress you—to promote myself in your eyes.

And Jesus is saying that ours ought to be a life of humility, where we're willing to take the lowest spot. And He's going to talk about that, frankly, in the next section, which is even a little bit more of an application of this sort of thing. But humility is such an important thing for you and I to lay hold of, but I think a lot of people misunderstand what humility really is.

We think of pride fullness as someone who's always boasting about themselves, and we think of humility as the opposite—somebody who's always speaking negatively or demeaning about themselves. That's actually not true. Did you know that the person who speaks badly about themselves is just as vain as the person who speaks glowingly about themselves? Because both of them have the same malady: they're thinking about themselves.

Humility is not thinking lowly of myself. Humility is not thinking of myself at all; it's thinking about other people rather than myself. So, here's the deal: if you think you're humble, you've probably lost it because humility isn't thinking about yourself.

And that's why Jesus is the perfect example of genuine humility, as He was willing to think of other people and put them first. You and I are called in the Word of God to follow that example, as it's laid out for us in Paul's letter to the Philippians, up on the screen for you. Paul writes:

Philippians 2:3-8 (ESV)

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (In fact, he goes on to say) Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, (And that means even though Jesus is God in human flesh, He) did not count equality (that equality) with God... (as something to be grasped or held on to,) but... (chose rather to empty) himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And (then) being found in human form, (He went further) he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point

of death, even... (the most humiliating form of execution known to man, which was crucifixion on a cross.)

I know. And that's our example. It's overwhelming, isn't it? Because I know my human heart—I know my human heart wants to be promoted, my human heart wants to be recognized, my human heart wants to be liked and appreciated. If I'm not careful, I'm going to start living for that end, for that goal, to be liked by other people, so much so that I stop caring about what God thinks. And it's a real trap, let me tell you.

And then He adds to this idea of self-promotion by talking about the false reasons why we might be generous or hospitable to others. Look at verse 12: *“He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.”*

Now, please understand—don't read the New Testament with an Old Testament legalistic mindset. Jesus is not telling you that you may not have a party and invite your family. He's not saying that. He's talking about those times when our motive in inviting people into our lives, over to our home, or to something we're doing is so that we might gain something in return.

In other words, we might do it to obligate them to return the favor or we're doing it in order to be seen with people of higher standing than perhaps are we or whatever. It's basically doing it for the purpose of repayment. And that's what He's warning us against. And so He says, if whatever you're doing in life, don't do it for repayment, for show, or for others—do things unto the Lord.

It's the same thing He said about prayer when He talked about the Pharisees, how they love to pray on the street corners so everybody could hear them: Oh, Lord. Oh, he's praying over there. Isn't he holy? Holy guy (Luke 18:9-14). And it's like... He said, No! When you pray, go into your inner room, close the door, shut the window. Don't let anybody know that you're praying except your Father in heaven, who sees what is done in secret, and He will reward you. (Matthew 6:6)

We're back to this whole weird, twisted reason why we do things. Have you ever gotten a gift from somebody and you didn't get them anything? That's awkward. Like somebody comes up to you at work and goes, hey, I got you a Christmas gift, and they hand it to you, and you're like, oh, I didn't get you anything. And you instantly feel obligated, right? Because that's just the way we are as humans. And it can become this consuming sort of thing. And Jesus says, just be very, very careful about that.

He says, listen. If you care about getting anyone's attention in life, get God's attention. But His attention does not come the way man's attention comes. His attention comes not through self-promotion and obligating others to return the favor. His attention comes as you do things privately.

Remember, we talked last week here in Luke, where Jesus said that those who are last now are going to be first in the kingdom (Luke 13:30). There are going to be a lot of people whom God is going to promote who never once in their lives promoted themselves. But God has this amazing accounting program running in heaven, and He's keeping track. And it's the way of the kingdom.

Then we come to the final section of the passage, beginning in verse 15. It begins with a comment made by one of the dinner guests, who speaks up and says, "*Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!*"

It was the belief of the Jews that Messiah would come, and when He establishes His kingdom, there will be a great feast. And so he's basically saying, blessed are those who are invited to the feast, right? Of course, he's thinking about Jews because no Jew in his right mind would consider a Gentile as possibly being in on that feast.

Jesus begins to tell a parable to them to speak of a banquet that is given by an individual. In verse 16, He says, "*A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.*"

Now, let me explain how they invited people to banquets back then. If you were going to have a banquet, you would send out an invitation weeks in advance, and you would tell all the people who were invited, I'm going to have a banquet, but you wouldn't necessarily tell them the day on which the banquet was going to be. You would just tell them, I'm having a banquet, get ready. Okay. Isn't that cool?

We're so calendar-oriented, mark your calendar. Well, they weren't all that; it was just like, hey, when it's ready, I'll tell you when it's ready. It was, okay, cool. And then what they would do when the banquet was ready is they would send their messengers out a second time to basically say, okay, it's ready. Come. Yeah, that's how things went back then.

And that's exactly what Jesus says in verse 17. Look with me there: "*And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been (past tense) invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'*"

Then, as Jesus tells the parable, He goes on to let us know that one by one, people started giving these lame excuses for why they needed to be excused from the banquet.

One guy just bought some land—got to go look at it, just bought me a piece of property. Another guy bought some animals—got to go try them out. And I love the last one: I just got married, and she won't let me go, or something like that; I don't know. Whatever the deal was, I don't know.

Verse 21 says, *“So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘(All right) Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in (whoever you find) the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’”* And they did that.

In verse 22, it says, *“And the servant (came back and he) said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room (there’s more room for people).’”*²³ *And the master said to the servant, ‘(This time) go out to the highways...’”*

That means catch people as they're just walking by. They don't even live here; they're just passing through the area. Just go tell them, hey, we're having a big banquet here. You want a meal? Come on, and just go get them. He says, go out to the highways, to the hedges, and bring the people in so that my house may be filled. And then He says in a sobering summation of this, *“For I tell you, none of those men who were (originally) invited shall taste my banquet.”*

It was a great parable, and it's not hard to figure out the symbols, the allegory behind this. I mean, the master of the house is obviously God, and the invitation that went out to Israel initially is that which was sent through the Old Testament prophets.

And then the final invitation that the Kingdom of God is here and it's ready is now being given by the Son of God Himself to the people who have been invited. But then we see that there are unworthy guests in this story, too, and obviously, they are all those who were invited by God but, for whatever reason, chose to ignore that invitation.

And in the present context of this parable, you know that Jesus is speaking to Israelites. He's speaking to the Jews about this invitation, and this whole thing applies to them in its original context.

However, there are truths in this parable that obviously speak to anyone who chooses to ignore the gospel and considers the invitation of God to embrace what Jesus did on the cross as something of little importance. And that's a very, very dangerous thing when someone does that. I think we've all talked with people, dealt with people, who considered it of little importance.

I told you guys about years ago how I was asked to speak to a man who was very ill and probably not going to be on this planet much longer. I was told by

someone, you need to talk to this guy and share the gospel with him. Okay. All right. And I did. He actually came into the office here and sat down. I started asking him about his physical condition, and it was bad. I told him, well, you're about to meet God, and you need to be ready. And I shared the gospel as clearly and as simply as I knew how.

His response was similar to what we see here in this parable. He didn't actually respond to the gospel. I finished in such a way as to say, well, what do you think? And he was like, did I tell you about my car? He just changed the subject.

I was flabbergasted. I thought, man, here you are; you're going to die soon, and there is an invitation that God has given, and you're ignoring it. You're treating it like it has absolutely zero importance. I was just blown away. It really impacted me, and, thinking about that, I thought about this passage in Hebrews, chapter 2. Let me put it on the screen for you. Listen to what he says:

Hebrew 2:2-3 (ESV)

...if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

...if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment (as we see in the Old Testament, now he brings to you and I), how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

How in the world are we going to escape if we ignore this salvation that is being declared to us through God's Word? I hope that there's nobody here today who's listening to me, who's ignoring the invitation because God has made His invitation. It has gone out to all the world. And the invitation is this: come and be one of my children.

I will forgive you for every sin you have ever committed or ever will commit if you will just receive the sacrifice that my son, Jesus, made on the cross (Romans 10:9-10 and Hebrews 10:1). That's the invitation.

So, are we ignoring it, or have we embraced it? Have we opened our hearts to it? And, just as a final thought, this parable that we're looking at here, and frankly others like it, are one of the many reasons I believe that predestination is only one side of the coin that we call our salvation and how our salvation is given.

For those of you that may not be big into predestination, let me just tell you that in the book of Romans, Paul talks about the fact that we have been predestined according to the foreknowledge of God (Romans 8:29-30). And what that means is God knew you, and He knew you were going to come to Him even before you did.

And those whom He predestined, He elected to be His children, but He did it according to His foreknowledge. And what that means is God doesn't have to wait for things to happen like you and I do because He doesn't exist in time. He exists outside of time.

He created time, and time does not limit Him. God is not limited by anything He made. Okay. He's not limited by anything, period. So He exists outside of time; therefore, He knows all who will come, and through that foreknowledge, He predestined us to be His own, right?

Well, and so, biblical predestination is a beautiful picture of our salvation from God's perspective. But that's not your perspective, and it's not my perspective because I live in time just like you do. I'm a slave of time. I can't jump into the past; I can't jump into the future. I'm just right here, right now, just like you are.

And so, when we look at salvation from our perspective, which is the human, earthly perspective, it looks very much like this parable, where there's an invitation that has gone out and that you and I are called to respond to that invitation. And that we are in, all of us, the valley of decision, and we must make a decision to respond appropriately to the invitation that's been given. You see what I'm saying? That is the other side of our salvation.

So you see, our salvation and how it comes to us is this two-sided coin, if you will. And on one side, you have predestination, which is, according to God's foreknowledge, He always knew that you were going to come to Him. But you see, there are a lot of people who believe that just because God foreknows something, He fixes it, and there's nothing you can do about it.

And that's a problem, you see, because if you look at the single side, if your salvation is a one-sided coin to you, you're going to end up believing that God chooses some people to be saved, and He chooses some people to go to hell. And that's not what the Bible teaches.

This parable very clearly tells us that there is an invitation that goes out and that individuals can be invited, and yet they can choose, by an act of their will, to say, that's not important enough for me to consider. And that's essentially the way Jesus tells it in this situation.

So the only possible way for you and I to have a true biblical picture of our salvation is that we're going to see it both from God's perspective, which is from eternity—He always knew that you would come—and you're going to see it also from your perspective, which is the perspective of time and choosing, because they are both equally true. God predestines us, and He gives us a choice.

But just me saying that right now, I know that I'm going to get some nasty grams this week, because there are people who refuse to believe it. They'll say—they'll write to me; I've heard it a lot of times—Pastor Paul, you're an idiot. There's no possible way that our salvation can be the byproduct of God's pre-election and our choice at the same time.

And they'll say to me, How do you explain those two side by side? And I tell them, I don't because I don't have to; the Bible simply says they're both true. We have been elect. God chose us before the foundation of the earth, and we, in the valley of decision, must choose to accept His invitation of eternal life. Let's stand together, and I hope with all my heart that you have accepted His invitation because if not, you need to do it—not for me, for you. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You so much for the insight that we gain from Your word. It's a beautiful thing, and we thank You, Lord, that You have blessed us with a wonderful invitation to come and be a part—to receive all the blessings, all the wonderful blessings of what it means to be a child of God, to have our sins forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, to come in and be part of the family.

Father, I pray that if there are any here today who have not accepted that invitation, that even right now, while I'm praying, that in the quiet of their own heart, they would turn to You and say, yes, Jesus, I accept. I accept Your invitation, and I'm waiting for You to come.

I'm waiting for the trumpet to sound when the banquet is ready and for You to gather up the guests who will come and be a part of Your kingdom. Lord, keep us until that day. Keep us looking to You, keep us focused on You, keep us learning and growing and changing, keep us transforming into the image of Jesus Christ.

Keep us walking with You, talking with You, loving You, and serving You until that day—that day when You come for Your people. Be with us, we pray, in Jesus' precious name, amen.