

Call to Obedience #400
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen

By Reimar Schultze

The parable of the marriage feast in Matthew 22 (similar to the great supper in Luke 14) illustrates Jesus' point that being called by God is not the same as making it to heaven. This makes this one of the most sobering texts to be found anywhere in the Bible, proving to all of us how narrow the way to heaven really is. Jesus said, *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it* (Matthew 7:14).

However, those who put their heart into finding this way will surely find it! Jeremiah says, *And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart* (Jeremiah 29:13).

Now, let us get into our text. The word *called* in this context is synonymous with *bidden, invited* or *elected*. However, this article does not intend to research the word *called* or *chosen* exhaustively. What is at issue here is what Jesus meant when He gave these teachings.

In both parables, the host prepares a banquet and invites many guests. But when the actual day arrives, all guests, all previously bidden, refuse to show up, and their places at the feast are given to others. What you need to know here is that in those days two invitations would be sent out for weddings or similar festive events. Initially there was a general invitation defining who the King wanted to be there. Then there was the specific invitation that would be given when the preparations were complete, the table was laid, the food was on it and the candles were lit.

And this theme of the marriage of the Lamb, of the bidden and chosen runs all the way through the Bible. For example in the Old Testament, all the sons of Abraham were elected in Abraham to be at the feast. So is the general call of God and of Jesus to this very day. As the children of the old covenant were all invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb, so also are all children of the new covenant. So Jesus' point in this parable here is that **out of all who have been called, only a few of them will be chosen to be the bride on that final day.**

Now, all the ones who were bidden or called were no doubt happy to have been invited because with it their names had been written in the Lamb's book of life. But when it came down to the actual wedding day, all of them were too busy with their things, their farms or their businesses. The Bible says, *And they all with one consent began to make excuse...* (Luke 14:18). This means that after they made their first excuse, their mindset was to continue to put farm and business above the Lordship of Christ. With that, these invited ones, **these elected ones, became rejected ones**. They had *lost their first love*. Because they rejected the call of their Master, they incurred His wrath and were refused to eat of His table forever (Luke 14:21-24). *Many are called, but few are chosen* (Matthew 22:14). Is this getting into you?

You say, "But Pastor, I have a general invitation. I treasure it and I am going to respond to the final invitation. I am determined that I shall drop everything to respond to this final call whenever it comes." I say to you, unless you live in a constant state of obedience now and every day, you will most likely not respond to that second call. If you are not abiding in Christ and bearing much fruit now, you are not bridal material. Understand this first call is a call to all born again ones to immediately make themselves ready to meet the Bridegroom. But **this second call is not for the bidden to get ready, it is for the King to gather together those who are already ready** (Revelations 19:7). It is for the ones who feed from the Master's table every day and drink from the fountain that never runs dry. Again, it is not given to those who are reaching for a life of obedience, who are speculating upon it and who are considering it, but for those who are in it. They are the ones who will be the chosen ones, who will constitute the bride of Christ. *Many are called, but few are chosen*.

Again, the chosen ones are they who have *already* demonstrated a life of entire devotion to God. This was the basis used by Jesus when choosing the twelve. For example: Matthew, in hearing Jesus passing by, was already willing to forsake his career and family expectations without hesitation. Matthew already had established his godly credentials before he met Jesus. Therefore he did not first have to close shop or to do anything that would initiate a delay. Instant obedience to God was already his lifestyle. It was in his blood. There was a marvelous fluidity here of the joining together of Jesus' call and Matthew's instantaneous response. The voice of Jesus calling was fused with the motion of Matthew following.

Friend, if you do not have this kind of lifestyle now, you will be left behind when the second call is given. Invited, elected, bidden or called is not a guarantee that you will be chosen. **Election is voided by disobedience.** This is why Paul wrote, *Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved* (Romans 9:27). A remnant is always a small number. The way to life is narrow for both Jew and Gentile, yet there will be a large ingathering of Jews at the end. Peter also said, *...make your calling and election sure* (2 Peter 1:10). There were over one-half million men of the elect, who crossed the Red Sea and *...were all baptized unto Moses...* (1 Corinthians 10:1-5). Because of their disobedience, Paul referred to all but three of them as carcasses who fell in the hot sand of the Sinai desert (Hebrews 3:17). God does not call His chosen ones carcasses. Believing without obeying can make you a carcass before you are buried. Believing and obeying makes you a saint. *Many are called, but few are chosen.*

Many elected ones think that they have their tickets to heaven in their back pockets. They think that their salvation is sealed. Friends, Paul lived in the Roman world. The seals of royalty were made out of wax. Any two-year-old child can break such a seal. But whoever does so invokes the death penalty. Also, remember the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). By Jesus calling all of them virgins meant they were all born of God and washed by the blood of the Lamb. That meant that all of them had their names written in the Lamb's book of life. But five of these ten elect found the door to heaven shut to them because of disobedience. Their names were blotted out of the book of life (Revelation 3:5).

In spite of the proud history of Judaism in Jesus' day, many of the elect (the Jews) had taken obedience out of their covenant relationship with God. Jesus refreshed the election/obedience link, *If ye love me, keep my commandments* (John 14:15). Over and over again He emphasized the concept, *Many are called, but few are chosen.* Paul also put this teaching into his apostolic letters as an important church doctrine. But soon after the birth of the church, false teachers came in to promote that election cannot be voided by sin, and that because we are elected, we have our salvation in the bank. Against this, Paul vehemently protested with these words, *...Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?* The answer is a resilient, *God forbid!* echoing into all corners of the universe (Romans 6:1-2).

God did not make a one-sided unconditional covenant with man. You have to do your part which is to follow Jesus and Jesus will do His part in giving you grace to do it. This is the believer's security. It is to these children of His that Jesus said, *...I go and prepare a place for you* (John 14:2). It is such who can claim the promise of God, *...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee* (Hebrews 13:5). This promise is not to those who make excuses. God does not reward disobedience. Do not tell people who do not live victoriously that God will never leave them. Friend, by their disobedience they have already left God, with devastating consequences. You choose Him and He will choose you. Again, do not apply promises of Christ to believers who are promise-breakers.

There will be a great divide in the end, when the disobedient elect will find themselves at the same place with the most wicked in everlasting darkness. **The purpose of election is obedience.** Disobedience took Adam out of the garden. Obedience will bring man back in. Abraham proved his faith by his obedience when God asked him to forsake all (Genesis 12:1). Lot proved his disobedience by going when he should have stayed. All covenant doctrine has its root system here in Genesis 12 (see also Hebrews 11:8) in that faith without obedience is dead. Bring obedience into your life and you shall *...eat of the tree of life...* (Revelation 2:7), you will *...not be hurt by the second death* (v.11), you will be given *...a white stone, and in the stone a new name written...* (v.17), you will be given *...power over the nations* (v.26), you will be given *...the morning star* (v.28), you will be *...clothed in white raiment...* (Revelation 3:5), and your name shall not be blotted *...out of the book of life...* (v.5), you will be made *...a pillar in the temple of my God...* (v.12), and YOU WILL SIT WITH JESUS IN HIS THRONE (v.21).

Many are called, but few are chosen for this privileged position. The door is open for you to get there. You can be in a life of obedience in a second and remain therein forever if you keep obeying. Get started now!

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