

It Is Written

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“Jesus’ Attitude Toward Sinners”

By Jarrod M. Jacobs

The book of Mark is the shortest book of those comprising the “gospel records.” It shouldn’t surprise us, then, that Mark doesn’t wait long before showing us the opposition Jesus faced in His preaching. In Mark 2, we see scribes and Pharisees opposing Him and His work. Among their common complaints was that Jesus associated with sinners. Mark 2:15-17 says, “And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his (Matthew’s, JMJ) house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Seeing as Jesus just invited a publican (Matthew) to follow Him (Mk. 2:14), it shouldn’t be a surprise that when Jesus went to Matthew’s house, Matthew would’ve invited his publican friends to listen to Jesus! Jesus treated this man just as He had earlier treated four fishermen (Mk. 1:16-20). He simply requested that they “follow Him.” This would change their lives far beyond anything we could describe on this page.

The point being that Jesus looked at five sinners (Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew, Rom. 3:23) and saw not what they were, but what they could become! He saw people who’d do much good for the Lord’s cause and kingdom, but they had to be taught! Jesus was willing to teach. In fact, Jesus was willing to teach not only them but all that would listen to Him. This is why we see multitudes coming to Him and listening (Mk. 1:28, 33, 37, 45, 2:1-2, 13, etc.).

In contrast, the scribes and Pharisees had no time or compassion and gave no thought to the lives and concerns of the sinners around them. I’m reminded of Christ’s parable in Luke 18:11-12. Therefore, when they saw Jesus spending time with publicans, sinners, and the like, this was scandalous to them! If He claims to be God’s prophet, and people claim He is the Messiah, surely even He would know the kind of people He is around! (For more study, please read Luke 7:36-50 and see the attitude of Simon toward Christ.)

In Mark’s short book, we see Christ’s attitude toward sinners as respectful, compassionate, and loving. He never berated them for their bad decisions or sins. He never acted as if they were beneath Him (though they were - all of us are!). He did, however, tell the truth and told it unapologetically. He told the truth in a manner that they (and all) could understand. Please read Mark 2:15-17 and see that when Jesus was criticized for even associating with publicans, sinners, and others, His answer wasn’t a defense of their sin. He didn’t say, “At least they’re not hypocrites!” as some might’ve been tempted to say. His answer was straight-forward: “they need Me!”. Read Mark 2:17 carefully. Jesus said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Notice Jesus called them sick. He called them sinners and said they needed to repent (Mk. 2:17)! Can you imagine such language coming from the lips of the Lord? Yet, there it is. What impresses me is that these people seemed to follow Him in greater numbers the longer He was on earth. What had Jesus done? As we observe Jesus in Mark 2 and the rest of the book, we see Someone who showed compassion (Mk. 1:41, 5:19, 6:34, 8:2). He saw people who needed direction (Mk. 6:34) and saw sinners who needed salvation. The people responded to this genuine action and listened intently. What Jesus said in Mark 2:17 was not “new news” to them. They knew they were in sin, and now they knew that they had come to the right Person who could bring them salvation!

What can I learn from this short reading? I can learn first to not be like the scribes and Pharisees. No one is “beneath” you. All of us have sinned (Rom. 3:23). If you’ve been saved from your sins, then thank God for the salvation (Lk. 19:10; Mk. 16:16)! When you see people who aren’t saved, realize that you were in their shoes not that long ago. Someone loved you enough to tell you the truth. Now, love them enough to do the same (Il

Tim. 2:2; Eph. 4:15)!

The second lesson I learn in Mark 2:15-17 is to be like Jesus in my speech! Folks who are in sin need to know it! Friend, ***no greater injustice can be done to a person than to leave them with the impression they are saved, when in fact, they aren't!*** Jesus called the people sick, sinners, and in need of salvation. This is precisely what they needed to hear. If they hadn't been told this, they might've left the presence of Jesus thinking that they were just fine. Dear one, when you talk to someone about their soul, remember that this part needs to be said. You can talk about the weather, crops, children, the government, and 1000 other things, but if you miss the chance to talk to someone about his soul, you've missed it! There's nothing more important than the condition of one's soul (Matt. 16:26)! Pleasant smiles, hugs, and being neighborly will mean little when on Judgment, they look at you and say in so many words, "You met me day by day and knew I was astray, yet you never mentioned Him to me!" I would much rather thousands of people on Judgment Day cry that I told them about Jesus and warned them about sin but hurt their feelings than to have one person say, "You never mentioned Him to me!" What about you?

A third thing I learn from Jesus was even when He spoke of people being sick and sinners, He didn't seem happy about it! May we never take a condescending view of others in sin (Matt. 7:12, 22:39; Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20; etc.). As we noted earlier, it wasn't that long ago that we were in their position as well.

Lastly, I have to note that the message of Christ was a message for all. While it would've been easy for the Pharisees, scribes, and others to listen to Mark 2:17 and then think, "OK, this is why Jesus is with them." If we listen closely to the response, it was actually a rebuke to those people as well. Think about it! Jesus said He came to call the sinners to repentance. Amen. Was He not also preaching to the Pharisees, scribes, and others when He was preaching those three years? Was there ever a time from Matthew-John where Jesus stopped His preaching to say, "Scribes and Pharisees, what I'm about to say doesn't apply to you"? Jesus' attitude was that those self-righteous people were as guilty of sin as the rest (Mk. 7:6-9)! They needed the same message because they needed the same Savior! Jesus suffered as a sacrifice for all men, not just for the ones on the "wrong side of the tracks"! They would've understood Jesus' message here if they'd cared to listen, instead of wasting time pointing their fingers at others!

Much more could be said, but take what we've learned here and think seriously about our attitude. What kind of attitude are we displaying? Who've we told about Jesus in the last week? What efforts do we make to bring others to the Lord, beginning with those under our own roof (Eph. 6:4; Titus 2:3-5)? Think seriously about this, my friend, because the souls of those we love as well as our own souls hang in the balance (Ezek. 33:7-9)!

"Partakers Of The Divine Nature"

By Kyle Campbell

In 2 Peter 1:3-4, Peter outlines the fact that God has given to us "exceeding great and precious promises." Through these promises, we have the ability to be "partakers of the divine nature." This in essence means that we become like God as a result of obedience to Christ and development in the graces or virtues of being a Christian (vss. 5-11).

In practice, this means that we will make decisions like Christ would make, for His nature has become "second nature" to us. This reminds me of a popular slogan back in the 90s: WWJD, or What Would Jesus Do? Although variations of this phrase have been used for centuries, WWJD was developed from Charles Sheldon's 1986 book, *In His Steps* which was subtitled "What Would Jesus Do?"

Although I personally have never been big on wearing clothing or jewelry with religious themes, the idea promoted by the aforementioned question is sound. Because Christians are partakers of the divine nature, we do not engage in sinful activities; we have become dead to them (Romans 6:7). We live a pure, righteous life so that everyone might be able to see us and know that we are living for Jesus (Matthew 5:16).