

Association with Publicans and Sinners

by Kevin Cauley

One of the criticisms that Jesus' enemies so often employed was that He ate with the publicans and sinners. We find this criticism recorded for us in the following passages: Matthew 9:10, 11; 11:19; Mark 2:15, 16; Luke 5:30, 7:34, 15:1. This criticism was no doubt leveled at Jesus due to the fact that he associated with these people in order to teach them the gospel. The Pharisees had a strict standard with whom a "faithful Jew" could and could not associate. In essence they labeled out particular people in society and forbade the "faithful" to have relationships with them. These people included publicans, harlots, Samaritans, and "sinners."

Publicans were basically the tax collectors of the day, and carried out the will of the Roman Empire by collecting from the Jewish people. From their frequent association with gentiles alone, this made them "off-limits" to the "faithful" Jew. Publicans also had a practice of taking more taxes than the government required. John the baptizer told these tax-collectors that they needed to repent of this practice (Luke 3:12, 13).

Samaritans were half-blood Jews and that made them impure in the mind of the Pharisees. The

Samaritans were descended from the Jewish people who were left behind during the Babylonian captivity. These married the pagans who were already in the land and intermingled themselves so as to violate God's requirements under the Old Law regarding marriage (Deut.7:3; Ezra 10:2).

The harlots of the day were what we would consider prostitutes today. They sold their bodies for money. The Pharisees did not associate with them, no doubt, to maintain their sparkling reputation of "righteousness" among the Jewish people. Sinners were just any other kinds of people that no doubt, sinned, but also, that the Pharisees would not associate on account of their "reputation." These sinners might have been adulterers, thieves, or even other harlots and publicans. It was an all-inclusive category.

First, it should be clear to all that Jesus did not associate with these people in order to engage in their sinful practices. Jesus was the sinless Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:19). He never once committed a sin nor even spoke an inappropriate word (1 Peter 2:22). Second, it should also be clear that Jesus did not associate with these people in order to legitimize their sin. Jesus called upon these people to repent (Matthew 9:13). He taught them that they needed to give up their sin and give their life to God (Luke 15:1-32). Third, it should

also be clear that Jesus did not associate with these people to aid them to further commit sin. When the woman taken in adultery was brought before Jesus (John 8:2-11) Jesus did not condemn her to death; however, Jesus told her to “go, and sin no more.” His refusal to condemn the woman to death was not license for her to continue to commit adultery.

Jesus did associate with these people in order to teach and preach the gospel (Matthew 21:28-32). What ought we to conclude from Jesus’ association with these classes of society? First, we need to be out associating with those classes of society as well for the same purpose. As Christians, we need to be in the world, but not of the world (1 Cor.5:10). What does this mean? It means that we associate with people who are steeped in sin, but we don’t participate in that sin. If we were to stop all association with anyone who had sin in their lives, then we would have to go “out of the world.” While such may be possible (that is, to practice some bizarre type of isolationism); it is certainly not feasible.

Second, we ought to be telling these lost sinners about the gospel. More than anything else, these classes of society desperately need the power of the gospel (1 Cor.6:9-11). We ought to focus our efforts upon bringing these to salvation through preaching a message of repentance and love, not through shunning them and isolating them from the rest of society. This means that we have to spend time among them and get to know them personally (as did Jesus) so that we can call them to repent in those areas of life where they need to repent.

Third, we ought not to criticize those who are trying to do such. Such displays a true Pharisaical attitude toward teaching and preaching the gospel to the lost. I’m opposed to homosexuality, but I want the homosexual to repent and be saved. I’m opposed to adultery, but I want the adulterer to repent and be saved. I’m opposed to murder, but I want the murderer to repent and be saved. I’m opposed to immodesty, but I want the immodest person to repent and be saved. If that means that I have to be involved in wholesome community events where these people are at, then I will be there. When we oppose those, who are associating with these kinds of people in order to help them come to the gospel and repent, we are really saying that a certain class of people are not worthy of the gospel. God is no respecter of persons (Rom.2:11; Acts 10:34), and neither ought Christians

to be.

We have a great challenge before us today to take the gospel to the lost. Instead of discouraging the hands of our brethren by criticizing (in the above way) their efforts at doing that job, we ought to be supportive and uplifting. It is not inconsequential that those who discourage others in this way, are often the least involved in evangelistic efforts. Such criticism is not only discouraging, but hypocritical. These would do well to heed the advice of Jesus in Matthew 7:1-5. Let us always remember the words of Paul the apostle to the evangelist Timothy, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim.1:15). Let us obey our Master, go into the world, and preach the gospel (Matthew 28:19, 20).

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Prison Works

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Cory Myers - 512.627.6672 (Youth & Family)

Tim Cooke - 903.641.5515 (Seniors)

Prayer List

James Ainsworth had surgery Thursday morning to remove an infected gall bladder. It went well and he is recovering. They wanted to keep him a couple of days for observation to be sure they got all of the infection.

Our Heartfelt Love & Sympathy are extended to Sloane Slaughter and her family at the passing of her grandmother, Mrs. Tina Aleen Estes. The visitation will take place at Corley Funeral Home at 1:00 PM Monday with the funeral at 3:00 PM Monday.

Continue to Remember: Gayle Garner, Sharon Mahoney, Velma McDougald, Bud Moore, Henry & Eula Parrish, Barbara Shore, Mollie Southard, Paula Spillyards, Patty Williams, Meagan Gould

Birthdays This Week

June 12 - Mary Butler, Billie Murphey
June 15 - Barbara Glass
June 16 - Polly Prater
June 17 - La Donna Hand, Josie Horn, Rusty Owens
June 18 - Margaret Ford, Caroline Southard

Next Week's Adult Class

Jesus, Mary, Martha, & Lazarus
(Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-53)

Records for June 12, 2016

Bible Class	187
AM Worship.....	263
PM Worship.....	145
Wednesday	162
Contribution	\$9,334.00

Service Men: Clay Bayes, Jason Book, Alston Compton, Robert Johnson, Ryan Payne, Douglas Ramsey, Ryan Stewart

Announcements

Registration is Now Open Online for both the Girls' & Boys' Leadership Initiatives. Please, register. All of the information is available online with the form.

No Summer Youth Series This Week due to camp.

Camp Ida Begins Today! Many of our youth group and adults left early this morning. Please, pray for their safe arrival at camp, spiritual growth and safety during the week, and a safe return home.

VBS Meeting Tonight after evening services. If you'd like to help out with VBS in any way, please, join us to make plans. Vacation Bible School is July 11-13.

We Will Follow our 5th Sunday Format on June 26, July 31, and August 28. Please, plan to join us these Sundays, bring a favorite dish, enjoy a meal and fellowship together followed immediately by our second service led by the young men. We will not have 6:00 services on these Sundays.

Important Dates:

- Girls' Leadership Initiative - June 24-26
- Vacation Bible School - July 11-13
- Youth Mission Trip - July 16-20
- Boys' Leadership Initiative - July 29-31
- Summer Youth Series (Here!) - August 2

Privileged to Serve

Song Leader	Zach Drain
Opening Prayer	Don Ivy
Communion Leader	David Shastid
Communion Servers	
Luke Baumgartner	Tyler Baumgartner
Tanner Bearden	Wade Braly
Joe Glass	Ken Green
Wade Hall	Caleb Jackson
Andy Parrish	Wayne Prater
Thomas Saunders	David Shastid
Bronny Watson	
Closing Prayer	Brent Stewart
Nursery	April Myers & Talen Myers
Security	Mike Drain, Zach Drain, Billy Roughton
PM Song Leader	Brody Owens
PM Opening Prayer	Wayne Prater
PM Closing Prayer	Carter Bearden
Wed. Song Leader	Justin Mahoney
Wed. Summer Series Speaker	Tim Ayers
June Contact Elder	Percell Milton - 903.673.1819