

Jesus' friendly actions provoke criticism and hostility

Mark has introduced the preliminaries to Jesus' ministry^{□1}, then a sample day of Jesus' early ministry^{□2} and a description of one very significant event that brought Jesus a lot of attention ^{□3}.

□1 1:1-20

□2 1:21-39

□3 1:40-45

What happens next is that a paralytic is forgiven and healed^{□1}, and Levi is called to be a follower of Jesus^{□2}. These incidents provoke hostility against Jesus. Mark wants us to see how such hatred arose against Jesus among the leaders of the land. It was the healed but disobedient leper of Mark 1:45 who first caused Jesus to be well-known in the Galilean towns. Now a string of incidents bring about a charge of blasphemy^{□3}, a criticism of the people He associates with^{□4}, a complaint about His not fasting^{□5}, and an accusation of Sabbath-breaking^{□6}. Eventually there is sustained hatred of Jesus^{□7} and a plot to destroy Him^{□8}.

□1 2:1-12

□2 2:13-17

□3 2:7

□4 2:16

□5 2:18

□6 2:24

□7 3:2

□8 3:6

Criticized for His authority to forgive

We see a **Saviour criticized for His authority to forgive**. Worldly men dislike Jesus' absolute claims. A miracle of healing takes place^{□1}. A paralytic is brought to Him, and it is so difficult to get to Jesus that they break through the fragile roof to get the man to Jesus. It is **their** faith that Jesus blessed. Who should believe when a sick person is brought for healing? Anyone! It might be the person praying. It might be the sick person. But also it might be the friends of the sick person.

□1 2:1-5

• **Friends' faith**

• **'Your sins are forgiven'**

Jesus does not say much about the sickness. Instead He says '*Your sins are forgiven*'. Evidently the sick man was more worried about his sinfulness than he was about his sickness. Most people are more worried about their sickness than about their sins, but this man is concerned about his sins. Perhaps his sickness had been caused by sin. This can happen, although it is a mistake to think that **all** sickness is caused by sin.

• **Jesus is acting as if He is God!**

But the main point of Mark's Gospel at this stage is the way in which Jesus' observers are offended by His words. What sort of claims are these? Jesus is acting as if He is God! He does not say 'I hope God will forgive you'. He simply gives an absolute statement ('*Your sins are forgiven*') as if He is the one who is doing the forgiving^{□1}.

□1 2:6-7

• **A critical spirit**

Jesus analyses the critics themselves. '*They were reasoning that way within themselves*'. There is a certain kind of critical spirit which uses argument and logic in order to criticize. They are searching around in their minds to find ways to criticize Jesus. What sort of reasoning is this? Are we meant to use our minds in order to criticize the works of God?

• **Knowledge from the Holy Spirit**

Jesus knows what is happening in them. Does He have this knowledge because He is God? Or is it knowledge that comes by spiritual wisdom? I think it is the latter. It is sheer spiritual instinct, enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we simply know in our spirits what is happening in the other person's life. We must be careful of suspicion, of course. Suspicion is an ugly thing. But sometimes without our having a suspicious spirit we have a knowledge of what is happening in the other person's heart. Jesus performs a miracle. It illustrates the ease with which Jesus can heal and the ease with which Jesus can forgive.

Criticized for His friendliness to Sinners

• *Levi's answers Jesus' call*

• *Jesus gathers followers*

• *Ordinary people*

• *Needy people*

• *Opposition from respectable religious people*

• *A friendly Saviour*

We see a **Saviour criticized for His friendliness to sinners**. Next, Levi is called to be a follower of Jesus^{☞1}. It is a very sudden and abrupt conversion. Jesus departs from Capernaum to the coast of the sea of Galilee. He is teaching multitudes about the kingdom of God^{☞2}. He goes out 'again'; He had done so once before^{☞3}. Jesus is using Capernaum as His base and going out on short missions to the surrounding areas. On one of them He passes by Levi sitting in his toll-booth^{☞4}. Once again^{☞5} He calls someone to full-time ministry in such a way that the person leaves his current employment suddenly and abruptly. Levi immediately answers Jesus' call^{☞6}.

It soon leads to Jesus having a friendly meeting with many tax-collectors and sinners, that is, people who were careless about the regulations of the religious leaders of the day^{☞1}. He is gathering around Him a collection of 'followers', who travel to where He is ministering to hear Him and be trained by Him.

Jesus attracts the ordinary people who have few connections with the more elegant society of the religious and political leaders. This shocks the Pharisees^{☞1} who think that a good religious leader ought not to mix with such people.

Jesus is ready with an answer^{☞1}. He is deliberately focusing on the neediest kind of people. They are the ones who need help.

It is somewhat surprising that religious people do not like God being friendly! God has a habit of breaking into circles of people and making new friends, and they are often the worst kind of people! Then older respectable people who come from groups that maybe a few centuries before were blessed by God, get offended. Jesus did not get opposition from tax-collectors who used their job to squeeze as much money out of people as they could. Jesus did not get opposition from 'sinners' who neglected the religious duties that the scribes and Pharisees liked so much. Jesus got opposition from people who said they were God's people looking for the Messiah to come!

Jesus is a friendly Saviour with no pretence or self-centred mannerisms that religious people often have. He combines great authority with great friendliness. He used only the humblest descriptions of Himself although He was the Son of God! He was a friendly Saviour – and He still is.

☞1 2:13–17

☞2 2:13

☞3 1:38

☞4 2:14

☞5 as in 1:16 & 1:19

☞6 2:14

☞1 2:15

☞1 2:16

☞1 2:17



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