

## MARK 2:15-17

## NEED-BASED MINISTRY

<sup>15</sup> While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. <sup>16</sup> When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" <sup>17</sup> On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

*"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."* Obviously the crux of the problem is whether one is sick or healthy, righteous or a sinner. Jesus came to save sinners, so the righteous have no need of him.

Back in the 1970s, there was a man brought into the emergency room at the Medical College of Virginia Hospital with half his face eaten away with cancer. It was clear that this farmer had been inflicted with the cancer for quite some time, but had denied he was sick and in need of medical attention until he was so compromised by the disease that he could no longer eat. He maintained that up until that time he did not need a doctor.

Likewise, the Pharisees of Jesus' time and the righteous ones of ours, see themselves as healthy and not in need of Dr. Jesus. Unfortunately for them, we are all inflicted with the cancer of sin and in need of a Savior. But he cannot help us if we do not "need" him. As only those who need a doctor go to the doctor, only those who recognize their need for redemption will turn to Jesus.

Whenever you are tempted to pat yourself on the back and conclude you are doing pretty well spiritually, beware of the trap of becoming "need-less." The doctor never gets to treat those who do not think they need him. In medicine, we urge you to get a physical every year, especially when you are feeling healthy. In the church, we urge you to seek a spiritual check up every day from the Lord Jesus.

**Good Lord, I thank you that you reach out to all who have a need with your healing touch. Through your Holy Spirit convict me of my sinfulness and need for your forgiveness. Keep my spiritual pride and the lies of the world from keeping me away from your healing embrace. Amen.**