

INFECTIOUS FAITH?

When Jesus called His disciples, they left everything and followed. Luke shows us how Levi (Matthew) left his tax collecting in order to count souls into the kingdom. Peter, James and John left their fishing in order to become fishers of men. Their new calling was calling souls.

Because Jesus said, "*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*" (Luke 5:27-32).

1- WHO NEEDS JESUS? The self-righteous Pharisees didn't think they needed repenting. Yet they were indignant that Jesus would reach out to tax collectors and sinners who did. Just as Jesus forgave the paralyzed man and healed him, so Levi came to Christ through repentance and faith. And in Luke 5 he held a great feast in his house to introduce Jesus to his friends.

So often in Scripture, those who most need to turn from their past to embrace Christ miss Him completely. The religious leaders, scribes and Pharisees, don't respond to Jesus because they don't see themselves as sinners. Yet they knew the Scriptures, "*no one is righteous, no not one, no one understands, no one seeks for God, all have turned aside, together they have become worthless, no one does good, not even one, there is no fear of God before their eyes.*"

2- ALL HAVE SINNED. Those Scriptures above, from Psalms and Isaiah, are repeated in Romans 3, underscoring "*all have sinned*" and all need the only Savior, Jesus Christ. Pharisees considered themselves righteous, not needing a doctor for their souls. They didn't want Jesus practicing his trade on those who most needed it. Yet they needed it most, notes RC Sproul.

Matthew's account of his conversion (Matt 9) adds another quote by Jesus (from Hosea), "*Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice.*" Jesus also quotes this in His sermon on the mount. The Pharisees were too religious with their rituals to get their hands dirty bringing needy people to God. They shunned others as unworthy of their attention.

"These religious zealots were completely out of sync with the heart of God," notes RK Hughes.

"Jesus had come to all those who knew they were sinners, not those who thought they were righteous. Their mercilessness was a sign of their unregenerate hearts." The disease of sin.

3- WHAT ABOUT ME? Jesus calls people just like you and me to repentance in Revelation 3: "*I know your works, so because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.*" These words resonate to us church people!

"*I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and your shame may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*"

4- YOUR RESPONSE? Exchange your old life for His new life. Your self-righteousness can't get anything from God. Like Levi, you must repent, leaving everything behind, and turn to Jesus. Jesus saves! You repent of self-righteousness and receive Jesus' righteousness, by faith.

And like Matthew, Peter, James and John, your life is changed by Jesus. Your life becomes all about bringing Jesus to the people around us. It is not only His commandment and commission, but your mission, to share the Good News. Rip off your masks of hypocrisy, and tell them!

JC Ryle sums up Levi's transformation: "Conversion is the birth of an immortal soul, a rescue of a sinner from hell, a passage from death to life, by the power of Christ's calling grace. It is a cause of joy to a true believer, as converted souls desire to promote the conversion of others, one of the chief objects of Christ's coming." It's all the work of the Holy Spirit in human hearts.

5- TELL SOMEONE TODAY! Write down the names of a few people in your life who need Jesus. Pray for them. How might you plant or water a seed of faith in them? Step out in faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit within you. Tell them today how Christ has changed your life!

Would you keep the cure for an incurable disease away from friends or family? You don't have to be an evangelist to share the good news about Jesus. You just trust and obey Him! ☐