

They Watched Him Closely

By Al Felder

“¹And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. ²And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day; that they might accuse him. ³And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. ⁴And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. ⁵And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. ⁶And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.”
(Mark 3:1-6)

Although the King James Translation simply says, “They watched Him,” there are a number of translations that say, “They watched Him closely.” In fact, there are a number of passages throughout the Gospels that mention how the Pharisees watched Jesus. The text before us lets us know their motive in doing this. The Bible says that they watched Him, “that they might accuse Him.” Later, the text mentions that they desired to destroy Him. The bottom line is that the Pharisees desperately wanted to find fault with Jesus. They did not like Him, and they wanted to destroy Him. In order to satisfy their hatred for Jesus the Pharisees watched Him closely that they might accuse Him. What a sad way to act toward someone! Let’s examine this attitude for a little while in order to make sure that we don’t develop it in our life.

As we look in the immediate context of this passage, we find several instances in which the Pharisees tried to find fault with Jesus. *“⁶But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?”* (Mark 2:6, 7) On this occasion, Jesus healed a man who was sick with palsy. Before He healed the man, however, Jesus told the man that his sins were forgiven. This drew criticism from the scribes. So, we find that those who disliked Jesus found fault with what He said.

Later, in the same text, the scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus again. *“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?”* (Mark 2:16) At this time Jesus was in the house of Matthew. Jesus approached Matthew while he was sitting at his table collecting taxes, and Jesus told Matthew to follow Him. Matthew obeyed the Lord, and Jesus began to teach others while at Matthew’s house. It should come as no surprise to us that the Pharisees found fault with Jesus. They said that he ate with sinners.

Still later, we find more criticism. *“And the disciples of John and the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast,*

but thy disciples fast not?" (Mark 2:18) In this instance, the criticism was not directly aimed at Jesus. The Pharisees tried to find fault with Him by criticizing His disciples. The Pharisees found fault with Jesus' disciples because they were not fasting.

Not only did the Pharisees find fault with Jesus' disciples for what they didn't do, they found fault with them for what they did as well. *"And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful."* (Mark 2:24) This criticism was given because the disciples plucked some ears of corn to eat.

Finally, in the passage we read in our opening the Pharisees criticized Jesus because He healed a man. As we consider all of these verses, it becomes clear that there was absolutely nothing that Jesus or His disciples could do to please the Pharisees. The Pharisees criticized them for what they said, what they did, and what they didn't do. As the text says, "They watched Him closely That they might accuse Him."

The Pharisees were guilty of having an obsessive attitude of criticizing and fault-finding through which they sought to tear down others. This attitude is destructive and evil. Those who possess this attitude dwell on the negative, and look for flaws rather than positive qualities in others. They constantly complain, and they are usually upset with something or someone. They have little control over their tongue, their temper; and have tendencies toward gossip, slander, strife, and malice.

Let's consider the passages that we have already read and look at the fruit of such an attitude. When Jesus healed the man of palsy, the Pharisees rejected the clear evidence that He was the Son of God. They found fault with the words He spoke and accused Him of blasphemy. Those who seek to find fault with others often reject evidence that is clear. They overlook things as they desperately seek for what they want to find.

In the second instance, we read where the Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating with sinners. Their attitude caused them to have no desire to teach those who were in sin. Instead, they sought to cast them off with no compassion or care for their soul. When Jesus taught those in sin the ways of God, the Pharisees criticized Him.

In the other instances, the Pharisees sought to condemn the innocent and righteous actions of Jesus and His disciples. As far as the Pharisees were concerned there was no good that could be done by Jesus and His disciples. Every action was suspect, and their motives were constantly called into question.

Such an attitude can cause a lot of damage. It can cause a lot of damage to the person who possesses it, the person it's directed toward, and the Church. In fact, I recall a certain situation where such an attitude was present. There was a member of the Church with whom I was familiar. Rumors began to circulate about this individual throughout the congregation. Over time people began to treat this person different based upon the rumors that were being told.

I remember having a conversation with this person about the situation. The individual denied the rumors that were being spread. As time passed, however, the rumors continued along with the harsh treatment from members of the Church. Finally, the person told me that they might as well start doing what everyone was accusing them of doing since no one would believe otherwise. That's exactly what that person started doing, and is still out of the Church to this day.

That person will have to give an account to God one day, and answer for the sins that have been committed. What we often fail to realize, however, is that those individuals who drove that person to that point will have to answer for their attitude as well. In fact, the Bible teaches us this lesson. *"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge."* (James 4:11) The Bible never condones for Christians to act out of suspicion, hearsay, or personal vindication. When we desperately seek to find fault with someone, we are guilty of speaking evil of that person.

When we speak evil of someone the Bible tells us that we judge God's Law. How is that? Well, when I disregard God's Law I put myself in the place of God. I view my desires as being more important than what God's Law says. Through my actions I say that God's Law is not good, and that I know better. Thus, I become a judge of God's Law when I refuse to follow what He has said, and go about handling things my own way.

The Bible has more to say about our attitude towards others. *"¹Judge not, that ye be not judged. ²For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."* (Matthew 7:1, 2) This passage should cause us to seriously stop and consider whether or not we are guilty of having this attitude in our life. God is going to judge us the same way that we judge others. If we seek to find fault with someone at all costs, then we can expect for God to judge us just as critically.

We must be clear, however, and point out that the Bible does not condemn all judging. *"Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."* (Matthew 7:5) As can be seen from the text, Jesus is condemning hypocrisy. It is wrong to go after someone when we are guilty of the same sin in our life. Jesus tells us to first clean our own life, then we are to help our brother.

Jesus gives us further instructions regarding judgment. *"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."* (John 7:24) Have you ever had a misunderstanding with someone? Maybe they took something you said out of context, or they saw you do something and jumped to some wrong conclusions. In their mind you became guilty of something that, in reality, you were not guilty of doing.

Jesus is addressing this very situation in this verse. It's easy to get a wrong impression about something. That's why it is important for us as God's people to seek all the facts about a

situation. Once we have collected all of the facts, we can come to a proper conclusion about a situation. Then, we can respond to that situation in a way that is taught in the scriptures.

Briefly, I want to look at some reasons as to why people develop this attitude in their life. Some of these we have already discussed, so I will just mention them briefly. We have already talked about carnality, hypocrisy, and ignorance. Carnality means that we think like the world. This was discussed when we talked about judging the Law of God. When we reject God's way of handling a situation, and do things our way, we are being carnally minded.

Hypocrisy was discussed in how we judge someone. If we are guilty of the same thing as someone else and we condemn them for it, we are a hypocrite. Our goal should be to clean our life so that we can help others. Ignorance, was discussed when we talked about judging things on appearance. If we do not gather all the facts about a situation we are acting in ignorance.

Pride can be another reason why people have this attitude. *"Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom."* (Proverbs 13:10) You can't deal with a person who already knows everything there is to know. Everything must be done their way or it is wrong. That's pride! It leads to contention! Such people never listen to anyone but themselves.

Self-righteousness can also lead to this attitude.

⁹And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹²I fast twice in a week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exhalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

Do you want to know the difference between these two men? Neither of them kept the Law of God perfectly, but only one of them realized it. The Pharisee set his own life as the standard by which people should live. If someone wasn't doing exactly what he was doing exactly the way he was doing it, they were wrong. On the other hand, the publican realized how inadequate he was in keeping God's Law. He knew that any hope he had was due to God's mercy.

The truth of the matter is that every one of us could find fault with each other. None of us keeps God's word perfectly. Does that mean that we just overlook sin because we all sin? No! It does mean, however, that there is a difference between someone who is growing in the faith, and someone who is not. We have to learn how to tell the difference between the two, and deal with them according to scripture.

A lack of love and mercy can cause us to have this attitude. *"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so*

also do ye." (Colossians 3:13) We can develop a mindset towards someone where all of their actions are wicked to us. As far as we are concerned, that person can do no good. When we look at their life, all we see are bad things. We have no love or mercy for that person. That's a serious problem! When this is our attitude towards others, can we truly say that we have the mind of Christ?

Finally, the devil helps people develop this attitude in their life.

"⁹Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for naught? ¹⁰Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. ¹¹But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." (Job 1:9-11)

The devil is the father of the very attitude we are discussing. He looked to find fault with Job any way he could, even to the point of provoking Job.

We too can act this way towards a member of the Church. We may look at them in order to find fault. When no obvious fault can be found, we may provoke one from them. Our attitude may lead someone to sin, or discourage them from serving the Lord.

In conclusion, our goal should not be to find fault with someone at all cost. We should not seek to condemn a person with hopes of destroying them. Instead, we should seek to build one another up in the faith. Our goal should be helping each other reach heaven.