

Research:

Matthew 9:10–13

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

“These were men and women who, through home and family associations, through their occupations, which were looked upon with disfavour by the more rigid Jews, often no doubt through their own careless, indifferent character, had little or nothing to do with their religious and orthodox countrymen. Poor wanderers, sinners, thoughtless ones, no one cared for them, their present or their future.” (Pulpit Commentary)

Publican is *telones* in Greek which means “a tax gatherer, collector of taxes or tolls. They were detested not only by the Jews, but other nations also, both on account of their employment and the harshness, greed, and deception, with which they did their job.”

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

“They had followed Him to see what He would do, and were at once startled and shocked to find the Teacher who had spoken so sternly to those who were professedly godly, not only talking to, but eating with, those who were, at any rate, regarded as ungodly and sinful.” (Ellicott’s Commentary).

Pharisees is *pharisaaios* in Greek which means “A sect that seems to have started after the Jewish exile. In addition to OT books the Pharisees recognized in oral tradition a standard of belief and life. They sought for distinction and praise by outward observance of external rites and by outward forms of piety, and such as ceremonial washings, fasting, prayers, and alms giving; and, comparatively negligent of genuine piety, they prided themselves on their fancied good works. They held strenuously to a belief in the existence of good and evil angels, and to the expectation of a Messiah; and they cherished the hope that the dead, after a preliminary experience either of reward or of penalty in Hades, would be recalled to life by him, and be requited each according to his individual deeds. In opposition to the usurped dominion of the Herods and the rule of the Romans, they stoutly upheld the theocracy and their country’s cause, and possessed great influence with the common people. According to Josephus they numbered more than 6000. They were bitter enemies of Jesus and his cause; and were in turn severely rebuked by him for their avarice, ambition, hollow reliance on outward works, and affection of piety in order to gain popularity.” (Thayer’s Greek Dictionary).

(SH 592:27)

Pharisee. Corporeal and sensuous belief; self-righteousness; vanity; hypocrisy.

12But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

“They that be whole ... - Jesus, in reply, said that the whole needed not a physician. Sick persons only needed his aid. A physician would not commonly be found with those that were in health. His proper place was among the sick. So, says he, "If you Pharisees are such as you think yourselves - already pure and holy - you do not need my aid. It would be of no use to you, and you would not thank me for it. With those persons who feel that they are sinners I may be useful, and there is my proper place." Or the expression may mean, "I came on purpose to save sinners: my business is with them." (Barnes' Notes)

13But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

“But go ye and learn what that meaneth—(Ho 6:6),

I will have mercy, and not sacrifice—that is, the one rather than the other. "Sacrifice," the chief part of the ceremonial law, is here put for a religion of literal adherence to mere rules; while "mercy" expresses such compassion for the fallen as seeks to lift them up. The duty of keeping aloof from the polluted, in the sense of "having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," is obvious enough; but to understand this as prohibiting such intercourse with them as is necessary to their recovery, is to abuse it. This was what these pharisaical religionists did, and this is what our Lord here exposes.

for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance—The italicized words are of doubtful authority here, and more than doubtful authority in Mr 2:17; but in Lu 5:32 they are undisputed. We have here just the former statement stripped of its figure. "The righteous" are the whole; "sinners," the sick. When Christ "called" the latter, as He did Matthew, and probably some of those publicans and sinners whom he had invited to meet Him, it was to heal them of their spiritual maladies, or save their souls: "The righteous," like those miserable self-satisfied Pharisees, "He sent empty away." (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).