

Jesus, A Friend of Sinners **by Jack Hyles**

"The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" Luke 7:34.

Every Christmas I have a little habit that I enjoy. On Christmas day I take some remembrances, presents and maybe some fruit and candy down to our Rescue Mission. I spend an hour or so with these fellows. We just gather around, have a few games, chat, talk about their past, their lives and their children, etc. A few years ago when I was at the Mission at Christmas something was said that I haven't forgotten. I spent a little while with the men. As I recall, we had a little question-answer game. If they got the question right, they got a certain gift. As I left the Mission, one of the fellows who had been there for awhile told one of the new men, "That's Brother Hyles. He's our friend."

I got to thinking about that as I drove home. I believe I'd rather have had him say that than, "He's our pastor," or "He's our preacher." He's our friend. I am your friend, fellows, because I too am a sinner and Someone Who never sinned offered his friendship to me.

Think about this for a minute. Our Lord, until His birth, had never been around sin. Only one time had anybody ever sinned in the presence of our Lord. That was when Satan sinned before the world was created, and he was cast with his angels out of Heaven. Our Lord had never before been around a sinner. He fellowshiped with the Father. He had had nothing to do with sinners. In John 17:5 He spoke to the Father, "Glorify Thou Me ... with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." What was it? The fellowship with the Father. He was ministered to by the angels and praised by the saints in Heaven. He had seen sin only once. From eternity past, to the foundation of the world, until Bethlehem, Jesus had seen sin only once. Then strangely and suddenly, He was thrown into sin. I mean, He lived with sin, though He never sinned. His entire life was occupied with sin from Bethlehem, and it will be so until the rapture. Think of it! He, through Whose lips never came a bad word, into Whose mind never lingered an evil thought, Whose feet never trod a sinful path, Whose eyes would not even as much as look on sin, and Whose fellowship had been only with the Father and with angels, suddenly is thrown into an occupation dealing with sin. That biography of our Lord, from Bethlehem to the rapture, divides into three distinct eras.

I. He Was Numbered With the Transgressors.

This part of Jesus' life started at Bethlehem and ended at Calvary.

At His birth He was numbered with the transgressors. Mary, His mother, and Joseph, His foster father, were coming to Bethlehem. Why were they coming to Bethlehem? They came to register their names. A census was being taken. It says in the English language that they were going to Bethlehem to be taxed. That is not quite correct. A census was

conducted and each person had to go to his own capital city. Jesus in His birth was registered in Bethlehem. He was numbered with sinners.

The very fact that He was circumcised numbers Him with sinners. Circumcision was a rite administered to people because of their sins, admitting that one was a sinner. Forgive me for being a bit blunt here, but the clipping of the wasted skin pictured that the Christian ought not to have sin in his life. We ought to be circumcised from sin, if you please. He was numbered with the transgressors. Our Lord, by the fact that He was circumcised, showed the race that He was identifying Himself with us: Jesus, a friend of sinners.

In Luke 5:27-29, Matthew, the tax collector, had just been converted. He decided that he wanted everybody to hear about his new-found faith in Christ and about his new-found Saviour. So Matthew had a meal and called all the publicans and sinners together. He said, "Folks, I want you all to know that I am resigning my position. I am leaving everything to follow Jesus Christ. I want you to know Jesus." Jesus was there at that feast with a crowd of the most motley people you ever saw in your life. There is Jesus sitting there, perhaps, at the head of the table.

"Well," said the Pharisees, "He's a friend of sinners. He eats with sinners!"

I am glad He is. I am glad He does. I am glad He was willing to eat with sinners. Our Lord said, "The whole hath no need of a physician. The sick people need a doctor. I am the Great Physician. Here are the sinners. They need Me." Our Lord defended the fact that He was a friend of sinners.

In Luke 7:36 Jesus went to the house of a Pharisee to eat. The Bible says while He was there a woman, "which was a sinner," came to the house and brought an alabaster box of ointment. She took that expensive ointment and anointed the Saviour. You recall that Judas Iscariot said, "Wait a minute! That could have been sold for a great price and could have been given to feed the poor."

Our Lord said, "The poor you have with you always."

I want you to notice that our Lord was eating in the house of a Pharisee and was defending a lady whom the Bible says was a sinner.

In Luke 15:2 again Jesus was accused of being a friend of sinners. Our Lord tells the parable of the lost coin, the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost boy. He said, "If a lady has a coin and she loses it, she will look until she finds it. If a shepherd has lost a sheep, he will leave the ninety and nine and go out into the highways and hedges and find the one and bring back the lost sheep. If a son goes off and is away in sin, when he comes home, the father will say, 'Oh, kill the fatted calf. Put a ring on his finger, shoes on his feet, and a robe on his back. My son who was gone has now returned. He was lost but now is found!'" The one son who was home, got mad and said to his dad,

'You never did pay me that much attention, and I never did leave.'" Jesus was simply showing that He was a friend of the fallen one.

Jesus was a friend of the blind Bartimaeus beside the road, a Nicodemus at midnight, a fallen lady at noon day, and Zaccheaus, with whom He went home to eat.

In John 4, the disciples were out to MacDonaldis to get some Kosher hamburgers. (They had sold only about one million back in those day.) Jesus said, "I think I'll sit here on the well." A little lady who was living in adultery came to the well. She was living with a man to whom she was not married. She had had five husbands. Jesus sat on that well and talked to her. Oh, Jesus was a friend of sinners. He loved her. He cared for her. Criticized though He was, He was always helping sinners.

Even when He was on the cross, suffering as no man has suffered, He saved a thief. He was numbered among the transgressors, dying between two thieves. He said, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

That is why we have our rescue mission. We want to be like Jesus, a friend of sinners. That is why we have a class for retarded children. That is why we have buses. Many of these bus kids who come from far and near have never been to church before. They don't know how to behave. When they come up here to the baptistry and I'm going to baptize them, some of them are almost doing the breast stroke while are coming in the water. As I start to baptize them, I go back and they go forward. I have to grab them quickly and take them backward. They do not know how to behave. All over this building, while we are here in this auditorium, hundreds of bus kids from over here in Chicago are here. I know some are little hoodlums. I know what they do. Thirteen of them got into the ladies rest room and locked the door. Some say words they should not say. I know that we sometimes have to disarm them. In some departments there are crayola marks. Once I thought, "Oh my, I'm embarrassed!" Then I thanked God and said, "No, I'm not embarrassed! Thank God, this church is a friend of sinners!" I'll tell you what. I know how we can have a real nice church. I know how we can have it so that no one will pull a switchblade knife on a Sunday school teacher and nobody will lock himself in the rest room. I know how. We can do just like most churches do and not be a friend to sinners.

Dwight Moody went to Chicago and started a Sunday school class of poor kids. One day he was walking down the street and saw a kid that had been absent for a few weeks. Mr. Moody said, "Hey, kid, you weren't there last Sunday." The boy ran down the street and Mr. Moody pursued. The fellow ran down the street and opened a door of an apartment house and ran upstairs. Mr. Moody got there just before the door went shut. He ran in the door and ran up the stairs. The little kid opened the door of his apartment and ran inside. Mr. Moody went into the apartment before the door shut, but the young fellow crawled under the bed. Mr. Moody got him by the foot and pulled him out from under there and said, "You didn't come to Sunday school last Sunday. I want to see you." About that time the father came in.

He said, "What's going on here?"

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Mr. Moody said, "My name is Dwight Moody." "Oh," he said, "you must be 'crazy Moody!'" Why was he crazy? He ran after sinners! Other churches did not want their carpet dirty. Other churches did not want their walls soiled. I know of churches who never have a sinner kneel at the altar, drunkards made sober, harlots made pure or bus kids made right. Do you know that we have about a dozen of our bus kids studying right now for the ministry? We have many of our little bus kids in Christian colleges. They were little urchins like a lot of the rest of them are.

I want there always to be at least one church in the Chicago area where people are friends to sinners, to the down and out, the high, the low, the rich, the poor. Look at the crowd this morning. I wish you could stand here. There are people out here that run great businesses, and there are people out here that don't know how they're going to get home after church.

We have folks here that will drive home in Cadillacs, and we have folks here in this room who do not have a way to get home. We have little ladies who will walk through slush and snow for miles because they don't have a car. We have folks who will go home today and will eat a turkey dinner, and we have folks here this morning who will go home and sit down to an empty table. We have folks in this building who are PhD's. yet, we have people here this morning who when they sign their names, have to sign it with an "X". We have all kinds of people here in our church. One of my greatest blessings has been when I stand here in the pulpit on Sunday mornings and look at the altar. One morning I noticed a deacon beside a poor little bare-footed fellow. That deacon is one of the vice-presidents of the Conrad Hilton Hotel chair. There was a deacon who owns a realty company kneeling beside some little poor girl that had long, straight, limp hair and wore dirty clothes and tennis shoes. I watch men of all walks of life, these deacons of our church, as they deal with these poor little boys and girls. None of them felt the task was beneath their dignity. I have thought so often, that is what the Saviour did. That is what it's all about!

Some little ones were brought to Jesus, and the disciples said, "We're not going to run a bunch of bus routes here in Jerusalem."

Jesus said, "Don't keep little children away."

"But they'll mess up our service."

"Let the little children come on."

Our Lord is a friend of sinners.

"I know, but He eats with sinners. He runs with Pharisees. He has been to Zacchaeus' house. Look at Him with Matthew and all those dirty publicans. He eats with sinners!"

Our Lord says, "Yes, I am numbered with the transgressors."

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II. He Bore Our Sins.

The second part of His life started at Golgotha. He had been beaten so that you could not even tell that He was a human being. He was bearing His cross up the hill of Calvary. When he got to the top of the hill, they put His body on the tree. They put nails through His hands and feet. Jesus, the perfect, sinless, spotless, lamb without blemish, was nailed to the tree. Why? To show us how to die? No! No! To show us how to be a pacifist? No! No! Why was He nailed to the tree? He died to bear the sins of many.

Remember that fallen woman at the well? Jesus took her adultery off her and put it on His record. Remember that publican, Matthew? Jesus took the sins of Matthew and put them to His own record. He took the robbery of the dying thief and entered robbery on His own record. The pride of the Pharisee was put on His own record. Jesus, Who never had a dirty thought, became an adulterer. He, Who never took one thing that was not His, became a thief. He, Who never had mistreated anybody or pulled a wicked deal, became an extortioner. He was the humble, meek, lowly one of Galilee.

With your sins and mine on His own body, against His own record, I think He said, "There is one place where I can look. My own family has forsaken Me; My own race has forsaken Me; My own synagogue has forsaken Me; My own disciples have forsaken Me; My beloved Peter has forsaken me; Judas, the treasurer, has forsaken Me; man has forsaken me, but there's One Who will not forsake me-the Father. He always looks down and smiles upon Me." Jesus looked up to see the Father, but there was no smile on His Father's face. In fact, His Father wasn't even looking at Him. All He could see was the Father turning away. Jesus said, in so many words, "Father, I expected My nation to forsake Me; I expected My synagogue to forsake Me; but Father, my God, my God, why has Thou forsaken Me?"

Do you know why? It was for sinners! Jesus of Bethlehem, Who had never sinned, suddenly became numbered with transgressors. He died for sinners. He paid the penalty for you and me. He paid the price for your wicked sins and mine. He became our substitute for sin on the cross.

III. He Began to Make Intercession for Sinners.

Jesus is back in Heaven. He is now where no sin ever enters. He is back where He doesn't have to be associated with sinners anymore. He is back with the Father. He has sat beside the well with a fallen woman. He has eaten with a Pharisee. He ate with Zacchaeus. He was a friend of sinners and He was numbered with the transgressors, but now He is back in Heaven again. He will not have to be bothered about sin, but He is! He is interceding for sinners. He sits on the right hand of the Father.

You have heard me tell the story about the little boy who went to church and heard his dad preach. He came back home and said to his father, "Isn't God wonderful?"

The father asked, "Why?"

"Because He's left-handed and does everything with His left hand."

"Who said that?"

"You said it in your sermon."

"What? I said that God does everything with His left hand?"

Yes, Jesus is sitting this morning at the right hand of the Father.

Dr. L. C. Stuart is a preacher who was wronged by the courts of our land and wrongfully indicted for murder. They tried him and gave him fourteen years in the penitentiary. We appealed the case. Our church raised over \$25,000 to employ a famous attorney to represent Dr. Stuart. They told me that this attorney had lost only four cases in his career. We felt so confident.

I was in a motel room in Wichita, Kansas, when they called long distance and said, "The trial is all over and we lost. Dr. Stuart is back in prison."

I went outside and wept. Then suddenly I clapped my hands and jumped up and down and said, "Praise God!"

You say, "Why?"

The Attorney Who represents this sinner has never lost a case! Jesus-my attorney, my lawyer, my advocate, my daysman, my intercessor, my mediator-has never lost a case! He is at the right hand of the Father and is pleading for sinners.

Let me see if I can show you something this morning . Once a year in the life of Isreal, in the seventh month of the year, the tenth day of the month, there was what was called the "Day of Atonement." It is near our October 10. Annually the high priest would take off his royal garment and sacrifice an animal. Then he would take the blood of that sacrifice, walk inside the Holy of Holies (where no one else could go but he, and he but once a year), and sprinkle that blood on the mercy seat. Then he would come out and shout, "It is finished!" What did that mean? It meant that the high priest had laid aside his royal robe and had offered a lamb for the sins of the people. He had gone in to pay the penalty for the sins of his people. Then he came out and announced that God had accepted it.

That is what Jesus did. He laid aside His royal robe of Heaven. He Who was never around sin, He Who was in the image of the Father, He Who was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, laid aside His royal robes and took upon Himself flesh like ours. He walked with sinners. He became a lamb, and on the cross He became that lamb offered upon the altar. He took His blood and sprinkled His blood on the mercy seat in Heaven. Then on the cross He said, "It is finished!" Sin had been paid for!

Someday when Jesus comes again, He will put on His royal robe as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What is it all about! Jesus-our High Priest, our Lamb, He Who never heard a sinful word, He Who never spoke an evil word, He Who never thought an evil thought, He Who never trod an evil path-suddenly gave His entire life for sinners. He was a friend of sinners. He died for sinners. He intercedes for sinners.

When I came to Hammond, I was apprehensive. The first day I was in my office, the secretary called me on the telephone and said, "Someone wants to see you." I invited the man in. He was the most obnoxious man I have ever seen. I have never seen anybody as dirty and as filthy. He walked in and I talked with him. I told him about Jesus and knelt to pray with him. As I knelt to pray, I saw Psalm 8:4 on the wall of my study, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" That poor old bum off of the street received Christ. I wondered if he were sincere, but I took it as a lesson from God that He wanted me to work with sinners while I was here.

A few weeks and months passed. David and I went to a rescue mission one night to preach. (I think David was six years of age at the time.) Right before I preached, a man stood up and played the guitar and sang a solo. I knew I had seen the man somewhere. They introduced him as the Assistant Superintendent of that rescue mission. I had seen him somewhere. Suddenly it dawned on me! That was the man who came to my office the first day I was here. I had won him to Christ. I had given that man a suit of clothes; he had on the trousers that I gave him. He was Assistant Superintendent of that rescue mission. Months had passed and he was still serving God.

I preached that night on Psalm 8. I went home, and David went to bed. I was sitting in the living room. I heard a call: "Dad? Hey, Dad? Could I talk to you?" (The lines of communication have always been open between David and me.)

I said, "Sure, son."

Dave came down to the living room and said, "that was a good sermon tonight, Dad."

"Thank you, son."

"Wasn't it good about that man that got saved?"

"Yes, it was."

"Dad, I want to be saved too."

I won David to Christ that night. There was a rescue mission man and my own six-year-old boy, both sinners, both needing the same thing. That's what you need. Jesus is the friend you need.

Jesus is the friend you need, Such a friend is he indeed; He Who noteth every tear, He will banish every fear; Jesus is the friend you need.

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"What a Friend We Have in Jesus." "There's no Friend to me Like Jesus." He is a friend of sinners!