

Origin of the New Testament

4-5-15 PM

On April 9, 1865, Gen. Ulysses Grant accepted the surrender of Gen. Robert Lee, ending the American Civil War. Many believed (and demanded) that the confederates be called to pay a great price for the cost of their rebellion, such as imprisonment or even death. When Gen. Lee surrendered, to most people it was unclear what would happen. When they met, Gen. Grant offered Lee terms of surrender that are considered to be the most magnanimous in history. No penalty or humiliation was to be inflicted of any kind. With this remarkable act of mercy, our nation began a process of healing that is unique in the history of the world. All this from one great act of mercy.

Christians are called to be merciful. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:13). Of course, mercy is something that by its very meaning is not warranted or deserved.

It is HARD to have mercy on someone who does not deserve it. When we look at the lost, we often are aware that they are lost by their own conduct. Too, their conduct is repulsive to the spiritually trained. Even harder to accept is that they wage war against the saved.

Jesus taught us how to have compassion on the lost. First, it is taught by His mindset and perspective to the lost. Second, it is taught by His actions towards the lost. Finally, we have a total image of action by actions He did not take towards the lost.

Jesus' mind towards sinners is seen in Matthew 9:36-38 in one word: compassion. Jesus saw the lost as sheep without a Shepherd to guide them. It parallels what God told Jonah about the people of Nineveh in Jonah 4:11. Paul said that those who persecuted him were blinded by Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4). We ought to have compassion on the lost in this condition since God had compassion on us in our sins (Matthew 18:33).

Jesus taught us how to act in His action towards sinners in Mark 2:16-17. There we see that Jesus engaged sinners. He behaved kindly towards them and He made their importance clear (Luke 15:1-10). We need to understand that He did not accept them as they were, but that His purpose was to change them (1 Timothy 1:15).

Finally, we realize that Jesus' non-action towards sinners (John 3:20) demonstrated that Jesus DID NOT engage all sinners. He rejected those who would not change, and He distinguished between them (Matthew 21:31). We are told not to cast our pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6); we must determine who is willing to change, and who is not.

We need to learn to love the lost and have compassion on them as those who have been deceived. We need to learn to engage the lost, offering them the opportunity to change, through kindness and genuine concern. However, we must reject those who reject this opportunity. We do not accept sin, nor those who will not leave sin.