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The Power of Biblical Thinking

Mark 6:1-6

Have you heard of the book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*? Most people in the United States have. Norman Vincent Peale is the author. It was first published in 1952. It had a big impact on Christianity and still does. How many people here have read the book? I have not read all of it. I have flipped through its pages and read sections. Before the era of cell phones, people used to have a magazine or book next to their toilet in the bathroom. At my mom and dad's house in Ohio they had the book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*. When you were sitting on the toilet that book was there for you to read **at my parent's house**. It used many verses out of the Bible, but two primary ones. "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" (Romans 8:31). And "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:13). Mr. Peale wanted you to repeat these verses and think positive, doing away with every negative thought. Now, on the surface this sounds good and it can be. The problem with the book is it took these verses out of context along with the Biblical teaching that God uses difficult struggles and trials in our lives to test our faith and teach us important lessons on trusting Him (James 1:2-5).

God is not some fairy or Jeanie who gives you everything you wish for or believe you will receive it if you think positive. God does not operate that way. We cannot believe away all of our problems. We cannot just wiggle our nose and get what we want no matter how positive we think about something. Why did my parents have that book? They probably had many reasons. One reason was that their daughter, my sister had breast cancer. She took several rounds of chemotherapy treatments and radiation treatments. We prayed and believed she would be healed. There were times we were told the cancer was gone. Then it came back and was more aggressive. After six long years of fighting, my sister, my parents only daughter died at age 49, as her body was full of cancer. We believed. We thought positive. But God had other plans. Not everyone is healed from their cancer no matter how positive a person thinks they will be. When Paul writes, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:13), he is talking about learning to be content in all circumstances. Not everything is going to go the way we want them to go. That is alright. Keep trusting God. We live in a fallen world. Adam brought sin into this world because of a wrong choice. God is not going to remove all pain and suffering and all difficulties. He does promise to be with us through it all (Psalm 23:4). He does promise to give those who trust in Him and His plan of redemption, life after death. Jesus said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die*" (John 11:25-26).

Do you believe this? Most of the world does not believe this. What Jesus taught is that there is only one way to have a right relationship with God. There is only one way to have our sins forgiven. Believing and thinking positive becomes extremely important when it comes to the truth of how a person has a right relationship with God and knowing how our sins are forgiven. How do we know that our sins are forgiven? God taught us the right way to believe. Jesus died on a cross. He shed His own blood. *“God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). He died in our place for our sins. Think positive that what the Bible teaches is true. Me as a sinful person, separated from God by my sin can be forgiven and have a right relationship with God. This only can happen when I believe that God has paid the total price for my forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus when He died on a cross. That is Biblical thinking.

Billions of people do not believe this. They may believe that their sins are washed away or paid for by many other beliefs and actions. They really believe and think positive about it, whether they heard of the book or not, that what they believe is true. There is just one big problem. No matter how positive they think and act about their belief, it is not true. Their sins are not forgiven. They are still separated from God. Christianity is not just another religion among all the other religions of the world. **Christianity is God’s revelation to all humanity** of how He has paid the debt for everyone’s sin and the importance in believing God’s revelation to us. *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). Let’s look at our scripture and the importance of believing correctly, Biblically, who Jesus is.

Mark 6:1 *“Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him.”* In Mark 3:20-21 and 31-35 Jesus’ mother and His brothers traveled from Nazareth to Capernaum in their attempt to get Him away from the crowds. It seems they were concerned for His physical and mental well-being. They were unable to snatch Him away. He did not even go out and talk with His family. That incident ended with Jesus asking the crowd, *“Who is My mother, or My brothers?” And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! **For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother**”* (Mark 3:33-35). Jesus was seeking to build His kingdom. Jesus, at the right time and the right way returned to His home town. Luke recorded that Jesus began His ministry by preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16:30). It was in Nazareth where Jesus first claimed to be the Messiah by quoting Isaiah 61:1-2. The people did not believe Him. Then Jesus traveled around Galilee, teaching, healing and casting out demons, proving that He is the Messiah. Now Jesus returns to Nazareth with many disciples following Him.

Verse 2 *“And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!’* Jesus is giving His family and His towns people another chance to place their trust in Him. He had lived among them for over 25 years. They saw Him grow up. He loved them. They first heard from Jesus Himself that He was the Messiah. Now they have heard the reports of His teachings and the mighty works He has done. How would they respond? I do not know what day of the week He arrived in town but they waited until the Sabbath to allow Him to teach. Again, the people of Nazareth were astonished by Him teachings. They could not imagine how such a simple carpenter could be so smart and how He could do so many miraculous things. They wondered who Jesus was.

Verse 3 *“Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?’* So they were offended at Him. To the people of Nazareth, Jesus was just a carpenter. He learned His trade from Joseph, step-father (Matthew 13:55). They knew the mother of Jesus and His brothers and sisters. The difference between a hard-working carpenter and a skilled teacher of God’s word was too great. The change between these two professions was too great for them to believe. Since they could not explain His change, they rejected Him and **was offended** at what He was attempting to proclaim. Jesus’ own brothers and sisters this time agreed with the vast majority of the townspeople. They did not believe the claims Jesus made no matter what He did to prove who He was.

Verse 4 *“But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’”* Here Jesus is making a definite claim to being a prophet. **A prophet receives no honor from those who have seen him grow up.** These townspeople knew Jesus all too well as a boy and a youth. They knew His education and training. They knew His skill as a carpenter. They must have concluded that there was nothing more special about Him. They refused to accept who Jesus was claiming to be. Didn’t they know He was an honest person. Why would they think that He would lie to them now, yet they did.

Verse 5 *“Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.”* There were a few people in Nazareth who believed Jesus and all He claimed to be, but just a few. Jesus could not do any mighty works among those who would not believe. The purpose of Jesus healing and casting out demons from people who did not know Him or know their need to believe in Him was to encourage them to trust Him and follow Him as Savior and Lord. Even if Jesus did miracles in His hometown, those miracles would not get the people to

believe who He was. It is interesting that Jesus brought healing to people to get them to believe in Him like Paul (Acts 9:17). Then after they believed in Jesus, they went through many tests and trials, suffering for Christ like Paul (2 Corinthians 11:24-27).

Verse 6 “*And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.*” There are only two times in scripture that it is recorded that Jesus marveled. Here He marveled at the unbelief of His own people. Jesus was shocked that His own people would not believe Him. The Jews of all people should know who Jesus is. They of all people should believe and follow Him faithfully. But here Jesus marveled at His own family and His own townspeople at their unwillingness or **inability to believe** who Jesus was claiming to be and what He could do to change their lives. The only other person Jesus marveled at was a Gentile (Matthew 8:10 / Luke 7:9). Jesus marveled at his **great faith** saying, “*I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel*” (Luke 7:9). Jesus wants us to believe who He claims to be and what the Bible reveals as true.

Do you believe who Jesus claims to be? He claims to be God. Jesus said, “*You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.*” And Jesus said, “*I tell you the truth, before Abraham was, I AM!*” (John 8:23-24, 28, 42, 58). Jesus said, “*I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved.*” (10:9). Jesus said, “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep*” (10:11). Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die*” (11:25-26). So what did Paul mean when he wrote, “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” (Romans 8:31). How do you know God is for you? Paul tells us in the following verses. God gave us the greatest gift. He had Jesus die to forgive our sins. Who then can bring a charge against those who have faith in Jesus? No one. Who can separate us from His love? Nothing. We live in a fallen world. Having faith in Jesus does not exempt us from experiencing all the struggles and hardships of this world. But with faith in Jesus, nothing can separate us from His love as seen in His sacrifice. What does faith look like? Living the teachings of Jesus (John 8:51-52).

Questions to ask yourself: Do you really have faith in Jesus?

Actions to take: If you really believe, live daily the teachings of Jesus!

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