

Section 5

Obstacles to Evangelism

Part 1: Common obstacles inside ourselves or the church that hinder us from evangelizing the lost?

I. Hold to some bad theology which deflates any passion to evangelize.

What is the cure?

II. Apathetic about the glory of God and the plight of the lost.

David Platt:

While some professing Christians have rejected universalism intellectually, practically they may end up leading universalistic lives. They claim Christ is necessary for salvation, yet they live their Christianity in silence, as if people around them in the world will indeed be okay in the end without Christ.¹

What is the cure?

III. Look down upon non-Christians as “unclean,” and prefer not to get dirty by having contact with them.

What is the cure?

¹ Platt, David (2010-04-17). *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (p. 142). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

IV. Have little significant contact with non-Christians.

What is the cure?

V. Start evangelizing but quit after just a short while because we do not see immediate results.

What is the cure?

VI. Unsure of what to say.

What is the cure?

VII. Do not have enough time.

What is the cure?

VIII. Do not disciple members of the church and so they are not equipped to evangelize.

What is the cure?

IX. Fear having to pay the price.**What is the cure?**

First, Paul - pray “also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Eph 6:19-20)

Horton:

The early Christians were not fed to wild beasts or dipped in wax and set ablaze as lamps in Nero’s garden because they thought Jesus was a helpful life coach or role model but because they witnessed to him as the only Lord and Savior of the world. Jesus Christ doesn’t just live in the private hearts of individuals as the source of an inner peace. He is the Creator, Ruler, Redeemer, and Judge of all the earth. And now he commands everyone everywhere to repent. All idols are shams. All power and authority not only in heaven but on earth is Christ’s. He has cast Satan out of the heavenly sanctuary, where he prosecuted the saints day and night (Rev. 12). And now, having bound the strong man, he is looting his house on earth, taking back what rightfully belongs to him (Matt. 12:29).²

Second, perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

Do not be afraid of awkwardness.

Third, Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1:8-12 that we must not be ashamed of our Lord and His gospel.

Finally, remember that Jesus promised to be with us always (Matt 28:20).

² Michael Horton, *The Gospel Commission: Recovering God's Strategy for Making Disciples*, Baker Publishing Group, 32-33. Kindle Edition.

Discussion: Write your answers to the following questions.

- Which item(s) on this list is a particular struggle for you? Or is there some other item not listed here that obstructs you from engaging in evangelism?
- What have you found helpful for fighting to overcome that struggle(s)?
- If you have not dealt with that area(s) of struggle yet, what do you now see you need to do about it? What plan will you make to begin to bring about change?

Part 2: Common obstacles outside ourselves and the church that hinder us from evangelizing the lost?

I. The Opposition of Unbelievers

1 Thessalonians 2:14-16: “For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved - so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!”

All throughout church history there have been many who oppose the gospel.

- Sometimes it is our family and friends. Sometimes it is our neighbors.
- Sometimes it is our government.

- Sometimes it is other religious people.
- Sometimes it is even some who profess to believe the truth.

How then should we prepare?

Remember the words of Jesus: “²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:28-33)

II. The Works of the Devil

2 Corinthians 4:3-4: “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

What does it mean that the devil has “blinded their eyes”?

In view of these things, let us make sure we spend more time in prayer about this, pleading with God to tear the veil away from the eyes of those we are evangelizing, so that they can understand and believe.

Section 6

Concluding appeal

The true state of the matter – urgent

I fear most of us are not urgent about this matter.

Think again about the man in the road.

Furthermore, remember how miserable it is to serve such a cruel and merciless master as the devil.

Spurgeon,

I remember when I have preached at different times in the country, and sometimes here, that my whole soul has agonized over men, every nerve of my body has been strained, and I could have wept my very being out of my eyes, and carried my whole frame away in a flood of tears if I could but win souls.³

Walker challenges: “Does our lack of fruitfulness in the pursuit of souls make us shrug, or does it make us weep? If we can only shrug, we ought to be thoroughly ashamed and repent with tears over a most criminal hardness of heart.... If Christ cried out and wept over Jerusalem, can we not cry out and weep over our families, friends, streets, neighborhoods, towns, and cities? Can we be content to shrug our shoulders at the great need of the godless to turn from their sins and idols and to serve the living and true God?”⁴

³ Spurgeon, MTP 1898, 55; from http://www.faithalone.org/journal/2006i/5_harmon.pdf

⁴ Jeremy Walker, *The Brokenhearted Evangelist*, 132.

Final Exam:

What has been one or two of the most helpful things you have learned in this class?

What area have you especially grown most in the area of evangelism?

What area do you still struggle in in the area of evangelism?

Do you have any questions about the matter of evangelism that have not yet been answered in class?

Please send your answers to these questions to my email at tjcchina@gmail.com. Thank you!