

Motivations for Sharing The Gospel: *Part I*

I. Our previous two lessons both dealt with the subject of overcoming fears; specifically the fears that we let keep us from sharing the gospel with others:

- A. We acknowledged that there are many Christians who have the desire to teach their friends and neighbors but are allowing themselves to be held back by various obstacles; some real, some imagined:
1. Looking at the examples of Jeremiah, Paul and Barnabas, we readily admitted that **evangelism is often times hard work**: This realization alone is enough to cause many who set out with eagerness to turn back
 2. There are various forms that the **fear of inadequacy** often takes: Those who like Moses continue to inadvertently insult the God who equipped them for every good work by claiming they don't have what it takes; and those who because they don't understand what success in spreading the gospel really is, grow discouraged and walk away.
 3. And yet for others it may be the **fear of rejection**: On some occasions this is about being afraid that the one you wish to speak with will turn you away. And other times this is about overcoming pessimistic brethren who would rather wait for your "zealous streak" to burn out than get swept along in helping with any efforts:
 4. Sometimes it means **facing up, and resolving to set a better example for others**. Often times Christians are not active in evangelizing because they have no role model: Evangelism isn't fasting and giving alms: don't do it by yourself in a closet: grab someone by the hand and take them with you:
 5. And finally, **the fear of not knowing what to say**: This is a two sided issue! On the one hand, we don't need to have the entire Bible committed to memory in Hebrew and Greek to be able to study with others: On the other hand, we do need to strive to familiarize ourselves with the whole of scripture: To be able to discuss the gospel with others without having to perform an internet search or grab a concordance or other reference work before we can answer any question:

B. These are just some common issues that we chose to look at: There is no doubt a much larger list than this. For the one who is easily dissuaded or determined not to be active, the list will never end:

1. But for those who honestly desire to be active in sowing the seed of God's Kingdom these are all fears and shortcomings that can be overcome:

C. Our stated goal for this lesson was to explore the other side of this issue, and take the time to list just a few reasons that should provide us with motivation to share the Gospel

II. **A Desire to Please Jesus** must be at the top of any list dealing with our motivations:

Where else could we possibly hope to begin? What else can see us through to completion?

A. We have dealt in previous lessons with the attitude that a disciple should have towards their master: We will not retrace that entire point: But it should suffice to say that if we truly desire to please the Lord, than any hint, any suggestion that He would be pleased if we took action, we should be lining up, jumping at the chance to do whatever it is! (*Illus. of pleasing a beloved Grandfather*)

1. I don't think that any of us doubt that it is the desire of Jesus for us to share the Gospel with others: Passages that record the commission from Jesus to preach are familiar to each of us: *Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-47*

a) Beyond this, the entire book of Acts is essentially one long record of evangelism:

2. If we claim that we desire to please Jesus, and we acknowledge that Jesus clearly wants us to be active in evangelism: *do you think that you can be pleasing to Jesus and not share the gospel with those whom you know need it?*

B. Consider an oft used passage from the sermon on the mount: **Matthew 7:15-23**

1. This passage is perhaps most frequently used, and fairly so, to argue against the point of view that as long as something is done to further the Lord's work, it needs no justification: Whereas Jesus says that there will be many who have done many things, using His name as justification, that will be denounced:

2. And yet we must not let the the other obvious implications of these verses escape our notice! What does this section of verses begin by calling our attention to?

a) You will know a tree by its fruit: A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. And most importantly in verse 19, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be destroyed:

(1) A tree that does not produce the fruit that is expected of it, it just as condemned as a tree that produces bad fruit!

(a) *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. John 15:1-2, 8*

(b) Certainly there is more to bearing fruit than evangelism: But neither can we say that it is okay for us to pick and choose what we will bear: This is why Galatians 5:22 calls it the *fruit* of the spirit, not *fruits* :

i) It is all part of the whole

(2) Recall the fig tree of **Mark 11:12-14**

(a) ***Jesus cannot tolerate people who only live their lives as Christians as a pretense:***

(b) Jesus' anger was directed at the Jews: Those who claimed to follow God, who claimed to want to please Him, but had no interest in seeking and saving the lost:

(c) Jesus cursed the tree for having the appearance of fruit, but having empty branches:

III. **We Should Be Motivated** by our unique perspective and world view:

A. Someone who is living their lives, guided by Biblical principles is going to stand out: They are going to be as obvious in this world as someone nursing a sore thumb: And the reason is that we live our lives with the end in mind: Knowing that our stay in this life is temporary, and believing that we will be called into account for how we spent that time causes us to make decisions from a different motivation than those around us:

1. Living with the end in mind *must* cause us to view those around us differently as well:

- a) *Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."* Matthew 9:35-38
 - b) *The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.* Luke 10:2
 - c) *Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.* John 4: 35b
2. Compassion can be a difficult emotion to stir: Sometimes it requires some sort of tangible stimulus to evoke a reaction:
- a) One may hear that someone has been affected by a disaster; but perhaps one will not be moved to compassion until they see the effects for themselves
 - b) One may be well aware of the high rate of divorce, but may not be moved by it until they know of someone personally who has been affected:
 - c) There is no greater affliction that our fellow man could have, none that should move us to greater compassion than their separation from God:
 - (1) But the difficulty in this lies in the invisible nature of sin. For the general masses around us, we cannot see them walking about as withered and discarded branches, cut off from the tree.
 - (2) For us to be moved by compassion, it involves us viewing those around us with the end in mind.
3. "I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect them at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and hell and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life..., and you think that it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward... How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?"
-Penn Jillette
- a) This is a theme that we will discuss at greater length in our next lesson.