

# Why Rejection and Resistance? Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, October 24, 2021

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or watching via the livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. We have much to cover in a relatively short amount of time.

## SETTING THE STAGE

**NOTE 1** – I want to offer a standalone message that is the outflow of elements addressed last Sunday morning. Last week we highlighted the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul and his efforts to spread the gospel of Christ unto the ends of the earth. Thus said...

**NOTE 2** – Whereas many came to saving faith in Christ, accepting both the gospel message and its messenger, many did not. In fact, a great many rejected the good news of Christ and opposed the ministry of Paul (i.e., violently). This stirs within me a desire to wrestle with two interrelated questions—questions that we will seek to answer today. Broadly speaking...

**Q1. Why Do People Reject the Gospel Message of Christ?**

**Q2. Why Do People Reject Those Who Dutifully Proclaim It?**

**NOTE 3** – Of course, there are many answers to these questions. I cannot offer an exhaustive response in this single session! However, I would like to propose eight reasons why individuals resist the message of Jesus Christ and its witnesses...

LET'S DELVE IN...

## #1 – PRIDE

Many reject the gospel and those who faithfully proclaim it due to the sin of PRIDE...

**NOTE 1** – We must understand that the gospel we are called to preach is founded upon the premise that we are inherently flawed and in need of saving (i.e., being unable to save ourselves). Therefore, true repentance and faith in the work of Christ alone are the foundational supports to everything we believe and proclaim. Yet...

**Q1. Who among us loves to hear that we are wrong?**

**Q2. Who loves to have their sin emphasized and spotlighted?**

**Q3. Who loves to hear that they are insufficient within themselves?**

**NOTE 2** – The humility necessary for salvation is antithetical to our fallen condition—and many will choose not to entertain a message or a messenger that calls for repentance and faith in something beyond themselves (i.e., sometimes violently). We see these principles evidenced in the Book of Acts...

**FYI** – The excerpt we are about to read is the conclusion of a profound sermon from an empowered Stephen...

**Acts 7:51–58a, 59–60 (NIV, Stephen Before the Sanhedrin)**

51 “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— 53 you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. . . . 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.

**NOTE 3** – Stephen exposed their sinfulness and called those who trusted in themselves to trust in Christ alone. Rather than humble themselves, their response was a violent manifestation of stubborn pride (i.e., as they would not yield to the gospel or its anointed messenger)! This is the record of the first martyr of the Church of Jesus Christ.

**KEY** – Tragically, the sin of pride can and does hinder the reception of the gospel and those who proclaim it.

**#2 – HARD-HEARTEDNESS**

Many reject the gospel and those who faithfully proclaim it due to the **CONDITION** of their **HEARTS**...

**FYI** – Simply put, many are hardened against the Lord, His ways and those who function as His witnesses. Tragically, and for a variety of reasons, a great many live in such a spiritual condition before God and amongst men...

**Ephesians 4:17–19 (Emphasis Mine)**

17 . . . I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles [i.e., pagans] do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the **hardening of their hearts**. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

**Q. How did Christ Jesus characterize those human adversaries who opposed Him?**

**A.** According to Jesus’ words in Matthew 13:14–15, they were hearing but never understanding, seeing but never perceiving, with calloused hearts, deafened ears and blinded eyes. Ultimately, the religious elite of His era missed their day of visitation—in part—due to the “hardness” of their hearts.

**KEY 1** – This is why Scripture proclaims the need for the supernatural work of God in our lives...

**Ezekiel 36:26**

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

**KEY 2** – This is why Scripture calls us to attend to the condition of our hearts...

**Hebrews 3:8a**

8 . . . “do not harden your hearts . . .”

**Proverbs 4:23 (ESV)**

23 Keep your heart with all vigilance,  
for from it flow the springs of life.

**KEY 3** – Tragically, the hardened condition of many against the gospel and His servants hinders their reception.

### #3 – DEMONIC INFLUENCE

Many reject the gospel and those who faithfully proclaim it due to the work of SATANIC FORCES...

**FYI 1** – We must understand that sinister spiritual forces are arrayed against the Church of Jesus Christ. Please do not think that Satan and his minions are excited about the work of Christ either in or through you! Rather, he is an adversary with whom you must contend...

**Ephesians 6:12 (NIV)**

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

**NOTE 1** – Satan and his deputies are continually at work against the work of Christ IN us...

**QUOTE** – “The devil is a constant enemy to the Christian’s soul. That great, sleepless, and unwearied foe is always laboring to do us harm. It is his constant object to wound, hurt, vex, injure, or weaken—if he cannot kill and destroy.

He is an unseen enemy who is always near us, “about our path, and about our bed,” and spying out all our ways, prepared to suit his temptations to the special weak points of every man. He knows us far better than we know ourselves. He has been studying one book for 6000 years– the book of fallen human nature, and he is a spirit of almost boundless subtlety and cunning, and of boundless malice. The best of saints has little idea how many vile suggestions in their heart come from the devil, and what a restless adversary stands at their right hand.” –(J. C. Ryle)

**1 Peter 5:8**

8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

**NOTE 2** – Satan and his deputies are continually at work against the work of Christ THROUGH us...

**2 Corinthians 4:4**

4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

**FYI 2** – We see the operation of points two and three in the Parable of the Sower...

**Matthew 13:1–9, 18–19**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

18 “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it [HARD-HEARTEDNESS], the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart [SPIRITUAL FORCES]. This is the seed sown along the path.

**KEY** – Tragically, many reject the gospel and its witnesses because of the work of demonic influences.

**#4 – PLEASURES OF SIN**

Many reject the gospel and its witnesses in preference for the PLEASURES of SINFUL living...

**FYI** – The author of the Book of Hebrews says something significant concerning the character of Moses...

**Hebrews 11:24–26**

24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

**NOTE 1** – Moses was willing to forsake passing pleasures for something of eternal significance and value. However, not everyone is inclined to make such a choice, much preferring the delights of Egypt to the glories of heavenly reward! Let us be honest—we tend to prefer short-term gains for long-term reward (i.e., much to our detriment and demise). It is folly, but it is exceedingly common!

**NOTE 2** – Does this world offer short-term pleasures? Yes! There is something alluring about a life devoid of sacrifice, selflessness, morality and holiness; a life in which we could embrace hedonistic pleasures that delight our carnality (Gal. 5:19–21 – e.g., sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, selfish ambition, drunkenness, etc.). However, we must contend with the following question...

**NOTE 3** – Does this world offer pleasures that compare with those of eternity? No, and we do well to remember that! Let us follow in the footsteps of Moses, who was willing to forego earthly benefit(s) for eternal treasures! Consider the wisdom of Christ Jesus...

**Matthew 16:26**

26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

**QUOTE** – “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” (Martyr, Jim Elliot)

## #5 – POWER & PRESTIGE

Many reject the gospel and its witnesses when their POWER and/or PRESTIGE are threatened...

**NOTE** – Let us take some time to explore two selections from the Book of Acts...

### **Acts 13:4–12**

4 The two of them [Barnabas and Paul], sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

6 They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, 7 who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 “You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? 11 Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun.”

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

**Q. Why did Elymas the sorcerer oppose the message and the messenger(s)?**

**A.** His place in the power structure of Paphos was threatened by their ministry.

### **Acts 13:13–15**

13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. 14 From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. 15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.”

**FYI** – Herein Paul capably preaches the gospel of Christ. Let us consider what happens after his message...

### **Acts 13:42–45 (Emphasis Mine)**

42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. 43 When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. 44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 When the Jews saw the crowds, **they were filled with jealousy**. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.

**Q. Why did the Jewish leaders oppose the message and the messenger?**

**A.** Their place in the power structure of Perga was threatened by his ministry.

**KEY** – Many will reject Christ and His witnesses when their glory and primacy is in any way diminished. Tragic!

## #6 – CULTURE & TRADITION

Many reject the gospel and its witnesses when matters of CULTURE and TRADITION are threatened...

**NOTE 1** – Many missionaries have faced persecution and martyrdom for introducing biblical teaching that is contrary to the established culture and/or tradition of a people group. Many would rather stamp out the teaching of Christ and its promoters than allow for its transformative power in society! This is evidenced in the Book of Acts. Let us consider the following...

### **Acts 19:23–27 (Paul in Ephesus)**

23 About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. 24 A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. 25 He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: “You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. 26 And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. 27 There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”

### **Q. How did the Ephesians react when their religious culture and tradition was undermined in Christ?**

#### **Acts 19:28–34**

28 When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 29 Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together. 30 Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. 31 Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

32 The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. 33 The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. 34 But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

**NOTE 2** – Ultimately “cooler heads” prevailed, and Paul was forced to move on, but there was genuine uproar.

**KEY** – Many will reject the gospel and its promoters when the work of Christ challenges established culture!

## #7 – WEALTH AND EARNING CAPACITY

Many reject the gospel and its witnesses when their WALLETS are negatively impacted...

**NOTE 1** – We just read Acts 19:23–27 and saw the reaction of those who perceived the gospel as a threat to culture and tradition. However, the passage also makes clear that the chief adversary, Demetrius, had other motivations in rejecting Paul and the message of Christ...

### Acts 19:23–27 (Emphasis Mine)

23 About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. 24 A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. 25 He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: “You know, my friends, that we receive a **good income from this business**. 26 And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. 27 There is danger not only that our **trade will lose its good name**, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”

**NOTE 2** – Demetrius did not care about the work of Paul and the salvation of souls until it cost him money. Interestingly, this is not the only time in Scripture that this issue comes up! Let us quickly consider the following passage...

### Acts 16:16–19 (In Philippi, Emphasis Mine)

16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. 17 She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” 18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her. 19 When her owners realized that their **hope of making money was gone**, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

**NOTE 3** – Certain Philippians had no concern for the work of Paul or the gospel until it cost them in the wallet!

**NOTE 4** – Do you think things have really changed? Imagine for a moment that genuine revival broke out in our nation and millions were suddenly saved and transformed! Do you really believe that those who profit off of the sinful inclinations of humanity would be happy? The drug dealers and drug cartels? The gang leaders? The pimps and human traffickers? The strip club owners? Those who promote the use of alcohol and substance? The elites who run Hollywood? The political class?

**KEY** – Make no mistake: those who would stand to lose a fortune would stand against the work of Christ Jesus!

## #8 – BELIEFS & WORLDVIEW

Many reject the gospel and those who faithfully proclaim it when they VIOLATE established BELIEF SYSTEMS...

**NOTE 1** – Acts 17 chronicles the ministry of Paul among the scholars and philosophers in the city of Athens. In this chapter we see the preaching of Paul to a worldly audience utterly devoid of a scriptural worldview. This portion is insightful for many reasons, but I want to consider the conclusion of Paul’s sermon and the response of the Athenian elite...

### Acts 17:30–32 (Emphasis Mine)

30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.” 32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them **sneered**, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.”

**NOTE 2** – Note the response of those who first heard of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead? They sneered! To those learned in the ways of the world, they deemed the gospel message mere foolishness to be dismissed. This corresponds to what Paul shared with the believers at Corinth...

### 1 Corinthians 1:18–25

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” [Isa. 29:14]

20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

### Q. To what degree does the gospel message go against the worldview and belief system of our age?

**KEY 1** – I do not have time to fully articulate a response, but the further this world drifts from Christ, the more its belief system will run counter to truth. Therefore, do not be surprised when those given to a lie turn hostile against the gospel message and those who uncompromisingly promote it!

**KEY 2** – We are long past the day when sharing the truth of the gospel will win you a “popularity” contest!



## SUMMATIONS & PRECPTS

**Q1. Why Do People Reject the Gospel Message of Christ?**

**Q2. Why Do People Reject Those Who Dutifully Proclaim It?**

- A1.** The Sin of Pride
- A2.** Hardened Hearts
- A3.** Demonic Influence
- A4.** Fleeting Pleasure(s)
- A5.** Power and Prestige
- A6.** Culture & Tradition
- A7.** \$/Earning Capacity
- A8.** Worldview/Belief

**Q. How should we RESPOND to these unfortunate yet certain realities?**

**A1.** Recognize that we are under obligation to preach the gospel despite earthly opposition...

**Matthew 28:19–20a (Great Commission of Christ)**

19 . . . Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you . . .

**A2.** Accept and expect a degree of opposition and/or persecution...

**2 Timothy 3:12b**

12 . . . everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

**John 15:18, 20a**

18 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. . . . 20 Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”

**A3.** Find hope and solace in the promise of Christ...

**Matthew 28:19–20 (Emphasis Mine)**

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. **And surely I am with you always**, to the very end of the age.”

**KEY** – Let us follow in the footsteps of figures of Paul who have gone before us...

**Colossians 1:28–29**

28 He [Christ] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

## CONCLUSION

**NOTE 1** – Those who wish to give online may do so at [www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org). Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the work of the Lord!

**NOTE 2** – Regular Ministry Schedule...

Sunday Prayer – Sundays at 8:45am  
 Sunday School – Sundays at 9:15am  
 Bible Study – Thursday at 6:30–7:30pm  
 Women’s Ministry – 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at 6:30pm  
 Men’s Breakfast – 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday at 9am  
 Potluck – Final Sunday of the Month

**NOTE 3** – Special Ministry Events...

OCC is nearly upon us! National Collection week is taking place November 15–22. We will host a special OCC Sunday Service on Sunday, November 21. Shoeboxes are available downstairs, along with information on how to pack said boxes. Ruth is set to host a special Q & A session after service today for interested parties.

**NOTE 4** – Church Membership

Those interested in church membership should see the Pastor for a membership orientation packet.

### **Numbers 6:24–26**

24 The Lord bless you  
 and keep you;  
 25 the Lord make his face shine on you  
 and be gracious to you;  
 26 the Lord turn his face toward you  
 and give you peace.