

Why Rejection and Resistance? Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, October 31, 2021

INTRODUCTION

In recent weeks we have highlighted the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul and his efforts to spread the gospel throughout the ancient Mediterranean world—with mixed results. Whereas many came to a saving faith in Christ, accepting both the message and the messenger, many did not. In fact, a great many rejected the message and ministry of Paul (i.e., violently). This has caused us to contend with the following interrelated Q's...

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

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

FYI – Last Sunday morning we explored the following four responses...

1) Pride

Many reject the gospel and those who faithfully proclaim it due to the sin of pride. The gospel confronts us with our sinfulness before God and our inability to remedy our condition, calling us to repentance and faith in the work of Christ alone. Since a great many do not want to hear that they are sinful or insufficient (pride), many will resist the gospel and those who dutifully share it.

2) Hard-Heartedness

Many reject the gospel and those who faithfully proclaim it due to the spiritual condition of their hearts. Simply stated, many are hardened against the Lord, His ways, and those who function as His emissaries. It is a tragic reality that many live calloused before God, darkened in their understanding with ears closed, eyes blinded, and consciences seared—fostering resistance.

3) Satanic Influence

The enemy too fosters this climate of resistance! 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” (2 Cor. 4:4, NIV). Thus, we battle not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, authorities and spiritual hosts that are ever-arrayed against the work of Christ both in and through us (Eph. 6:12).

4) Sinful Delights

Many reject the gospel and those who faithfully proclaim it because they prefer the pleasures of this wicked world. Most would rather satisfy the immediate cravings of the flesh v. serve the Risen Christ in order to attain an everlasting reward. Let the wise consider the words of Jim Elliot: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

KEY – Please feel free to check out this previous installment online at www.NewLifeBarre.org. This morning I would like to put forth four more reasons why a great many reject both the gospel message and its messengers. Let us delve in...

#1 – POWER & PRESTIGE

Many reject the gospel message 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!

#2 – 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!

#3 – 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 and/or ruling class?

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

#4 – BELIEFS & WORLDVIEW

Many reject the gospel and its witnesses when they VIOLATE established or accepted 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 biblical 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. 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 – 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm

Men’s Breakfast – 2nd 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.

NOTE 4 – Church Membership

Those interested in church membership should attend the orientation meeting held during our Potluck

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.