

Christ Reformed Baptist Church – New Castle, IN
Sunday School Class Series: Inspiring & Maintaining Our
Personal Gospel Witness.

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PART THREE:

The ignorant and indifferent person

Last week we discussed various aspects of the conscience which every unbelieving man, woman or child possesses as we examined the encounter recorded in the Bible that took place between Apostle Paul and his unbelieving capture named Felix, while observing Paul's interaction with Felix we learned that next to the gospel itself, perhaps our greatest help in communicating the gospel of our Christian faith is the unbelievers conscience, no matter how beaten and depraved it may be...it is still present within them as image bearers of God, and in our personal witness we must not forget to aim at it with the truths regarding sin, judgement and God's remedy through the person and work of Jesus.

I hope you would agree that it was to our great benefit to reflect upon how Paul witnessed to Felix; however it's also important for us to recall that not only Paul but Jesus Himself and the other Apostles also provide us examples of searching, challenging, conscience probing gospel witnesses that are specifically tailored to the various dispositions; or rather characteristics of different types of unbelievers that we are likely to encounter ourselves.

Moving forward with this particular Sunday School class series: ‘Maintaining our Personal Witness’ I would like to draw our focus upon how the Lord Jesus and the Apostles in particular dealt with four categories of unbelievers during their witness of the gospel, in order that we as Christ’s Church who are called to share our faith with others may be better equipped and prepared to do so.

The four categories of unbelievers we are likely to encounter are:

1. Ignorant / indifferent person
2. Self-righteous person
3. Self-interested person
4. Convinced person

➤ **THE IGNORANT and INDIFFERENT PERSON**

This is perhaps the largest class/category of the unbelievers Which are either ignorant and/or indifferent regarding the things of eternal significance. We ask ourselves then: How would we approach such an individual who seems totally unconcerned about their eternal soul? How, we ask...can we find a way to stir, trouble or engage their mind with gospel claims.

Persons in this category appear to be completely earth-focused in all their hopes, life aspirations and worldview. Their thoughts are consumed mostly with matters of home, family, work and the various pleasures and pursuits abundantly available in our western society pop-culture such as: sports, television, cinema and last but not least - the mega giant music industry.

In stark contrast their conscience regarding spiritual and eternal matters is zero; they simply do not care to hear about

anything of that sort, especially if it implies a challenge to their current comfortability and affluency.

What is truly sad about this particular type of person and their situation is that; to some degree, their indifference has been reinforced by what they see happening or being displayed as representing the Christian church.

To them, it is a scene of weakness and irrelevancy consisting largely of compromised leaders and hypocritical members at best or at worst a bunch of do-gooders who possess opinions about human relationships and affairs that are out of touch with reality, so they simply see no reason to become interested or involved with such a society.

1. THE STRATEGY OF DISSOCIATION

In our attempt to witness to ignorant and/or indifferent unbelievers whose minds have been poisoned against true, biblical Christianity, where are we to begin? Did Jesus ever face such people? If so, did He have a specific approach for them?

The answer is of course he did. The great majority of ordinary people among the Jews in the Palestine region during the days of our Lord were in fact largely ignorant of the TRUE MESSAGE of the Bible (salvation is by faith alone), and also they were quite indifferent to anything more than a superficial, outward, cultural religious identity.

In fact, we could say that they were more indifferent than the gentiles, BECAUSE...they thought that all Jews AUTOMATICALLY enjoyed a good standing before God which of course led to crippling complacency and indifference.

So then, what did the Lord do to arouse their interests and concerns and challenge them to listen and hear His witness?

Well, when His interactions are studied we immediately observe that ALWAYS His FIRST STEP was to drive a wedge between their mistaken ideas about religion and truth, biblical faith. The way He did this was by repudiating the nominal, powerless religion of the day, and discrediting its advocates and teachers. As He did so, the indifferent crowds around would be astounded and begin to listen to what it was that He taught in lieu of what they thought was the truth.

We notice that Jesus went about this usually in a rather dramatic way, for instance during one of the greatest of gatherings He interacted with He opened with this provocative statement in a clear effort to DISSOCIATE from false religious teachers (LUKE 12:1) “...Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” We believe that this strategy was employed by the Savior to jolt the minds of the people. He purposely distanced Himself from that of false religion to create interest in His distinct Gospel message.

Like our Lord, the first thing we must do is to be aware that in some way we must distinguish ourselves and our witness between genuine Christianity and the perversion or distortion which most ignorant/indifferent people today hold in contempt. People imagine that they know what the Christian faith is all about. But what they scorn is only a tragic perversion of it and so as we repudiate the false religion so-called Christianity we ought not be surprised to hear them say ‘Well, then what is right? What is it do you believe the Bible to teach’?

2. AROUSING INTRIGUE

After dissociating Himself from the false religious concepts and teachings of the day, Christ would also in His interactions with the ignorant and indifferent seek to arouse their interest and curiosity.

One such occasion of this can be found in Matt. 5 known as the Sermon on the Mount. There He taught that only the humble would have the kingdom of Heaven...that only the genuine and sincere would ever see God.

Think for a moment how astounded and intrigued the crowds must have been to hear Christ indicating that, they the Jews in general were not part of God's kingdom, but only His followers were! But it was in this state of astonishment that the crowds continued to listen more closely as they had never before.

Another example from this Sermon on the Mount is how the Lord again distanced Himself (in a negative way) from the false religious leaders, condemning their hypocrisy and showmanship...only to go on (in a positive way) create a hearing to speak about genuine prayer and the tremendous difference between the life which is lived here-and-now, and the life which is spiritually lived out for God. He urges them in MATT.6:33 "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness".

Lets look at the portion of this sermon recorded in Chp.7:13-14 where the Savior teaches a miniature parable about the two gates and the broad way and the narrow way which divides all humanity. VV.13-14 "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

We notice in this text, the Lord did not necessarily start immediately condemning their sin, but He intrigued them with the concept of those who will be going to Heaven (the narrow way) and those who will not (the broad way)...thus continually placing before their indifferent minds the idea that not all people will be okay upon their day of death.

Read V.21 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Think about how the Lord’s Jewish listeners must have been shaken out of the indifferent complacency and presumption by these words! Constantly, here we see the in Lord’s witness and teaching examples of things that were targeted to stir interest, compel intrigue against long-standing opinions and against their notions of false religion.

3. STRESSING THE ETERNAL CONTEXT OF LIFE

I want us to look again at LUKE 12 where we learn of another special aspect of the Lord’s approach to the ignorant and indifferent unbeliever which was: His stress on the eternal context

of life. This emphasis as recorded here is in beautiful harmony with the others we have been discussing. The Lord here gives a captivating parable of the rich fool, aimed at jolting the people to realizing the empty vanity of a life lived solely for material things.

We notice that FIRST he employed the strategy of dissociation in VV.1-2 and then secondly, He proceeded to stress the context of man's eternal soul in VV.4-5 and for His third approach He begin to touch upon the fact that Almighty God knew all about them from the hairs on their head to every word they uttered from their lips. The prable of the rich fool (a message on spiritual foolishness) laid the axe to the root of their spiritual indifference as it stressed the eternal matters of life over and against the vain and temporal ones. Repeatedly in this interaction the Lord stresses the eternal context in which we life is lived and with each illustration it would have been like a hammer-blow on the hard shell of the indifferent person's conscience.

Perhaps the hardest blow designed to stir up a silenced and beathen conscience can be found in VV.37-38 "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

4. APPLYING THE LORD'S METHOD TODAY

Well, for one thing we too must attempt to capture the attention of ignorant and indifferent people by illustrating that true biblical religion is nothing like the travesty and caricature which they have

in their minds, it is only as their false assumptions are swept away that their minds will be open to listen to the words which explain true Christianity in terms of great transformation, a new life and a definitely felt, personal, spiritual relationship with God through Christ which leads to Heaven.

But what are specific ways that we may employ some of the strategies we have just reviewed?

#1: THE BETTER WORLD BUBBLE

It is often a shock to the ignorant and indifferent person when they discover that Christianity was never meant to make the world a better place. The unbeliever often assumes that Christianity is offering something that will benefit them in a way they wish to be helped. To be of any value, it must be able to make their lives happier and more prosperous.

So, it comes as a surprise during the course of our witness when we tell them that the Christian Gospel has no plans to improve earthly society and make rebellious people happier. They are taken back at first to the idea that God has no intentions of blessing or improving a world which lies in a state of hostility to Him.

Very often, the indifferent person's reaction to this is to think..."well then, what is the purpose of the Gospel?" and this opens the door to the spiritual plight of man and the spiritual mission of God to save eternal souls.

#2: CHRIST THE GREAT PESSIMIST

Again, it always comes as a surprise to worldly minded people that the Lord Jesus had only a message of doom about the progress and future of mankind. The ignorant and indifferent person usually imagines that Christianity is simplistically optimistic about the future

of the world and society in general. When we explain to them that Christ in fact predicted ongoing wars and rumors of wars up to the very last day, a puzzled frown begins to appear and they will begin to listen more closely.

#3: **THE TRUTH ABOUT MAN**

Additionally, another way we can employ the similar strategies as our Lord in DISSOCIATION, AROUSING INTRIGUE and STRESSING the ETERNAL is by sharing with them that true Christians do not believe that man