

WORLD RELIGIONS

Reaching People in False Religions for Christ pt. 3

Lesson #26

There are a lot of lost people in the world. They come from different backgrounds. Some are actively involved in false religions. Others have their own personal religious system, which they may call atheism, agnosticism, or “personal beliefs.” We raised the question, “How are we to reach the multiplicity of people caught up in various false religions and philosophies for Christ?”

We have noted that Christians who are already saved, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and have a Christian world view, often imagine they can win people to Christ using man-made arguments or by presenting convincing evidences or proofs. Yet we have learned this approach does not work. It is not the approach advocated or modeled in the Word of God or verified in church history.

Instead of turning to our own thoughts and ideas about how to evangelize people in false religions, we have decided to turn to the pages of Scripture to find first what God says about all unbelievers and the method He has chosen to save them. In this lesson we will review the previous two lessons, look at a few more Scriptures to help us understand the condition of all unbelievers apart from the grace of God and survey some of the ineffective methods of evangelism that Christians use in an attempt to evangelize the lost.

I. REVIEWING LESSONS 24 and 25

- A. **We learned that every belief system presupposes certain truths, believing them by faith. Christians believe by faith that God exists and the Bible is God’s Word.**
- B. **We learned that faith, not evidences or human reason, is the path God has chosen to reveal the truth to people.**
- C. **We learned that the Bible teaches us that people must first believe the gospel in order to know the truth, for the Bible can only be understood with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.**
- D. **We learned we cannot, by logic or reason, prove to an unbeliever that God exists, the Bible is true, or argue them to salvation.**
- E. **We learned that all unbelievers know God exists because God has put the knowledge of Himself within everyone. Everyone has a knowledge of His law and a conscience within them and outside of**

them it can be seen in creation and what has been made that God exists, so that everyone is without excuse.

- F. **We learned that unbelievers cannot objectively weigh, without bias, supernatural or empirical evidences.**
- G. **We learned that all men are totally depraved which means sin has affected them in all parts of their being.**
- H. **We learned that all unbelievers are unable and unwilling to come to Jesus Christ for salvation apart from the grace of God.**

From the above points we have looked at so far from the Word of God, we begin to get a clearer understanding of all unbelievers in their lost state. We now continue gaining more insight about unbelievers so that we can better understand the method God has chosen to save them and why God chose the particular method prescribed in the pages of Scripture.

II. THE PRESENT CONDITION OF ALL UNBELIEVERS APART FROM THE GRACE OF GOD

- A. **Internal Barriers in the Life of an Unbeliever That Fight Against Their Repentance from Sin and Faith in Jesus Christ.** We have already seen from the previous lessons that all men are sinners, totally depraved, and that sin has corrupted man so that his heart is darkened, his reasoning futile, his conscience defiled, and his will distorted. He will not come to the light of the gospel for he loves his sin rather than light. The truth about God that has been placed within them and which can be seen in creation is suppressed in unrighteousness. Thus within every unbeliever there is a repulsion, a rejection, and negative reaction against the truth of the gospel and the person of Jesus Christ.

Now if the internal barriers in the life of an unbeliever were all that stood in the way of their coming to Christ, it would be a formidable obstacle. In order to lead them to Christ, one would have to overthrow the effects of sin, their corrupt heart, their love of sin, their inability to understand the Word of God, their distorted reasoning and love of darkness. And who is adequate for these things? Surely there is nothing within man that can overcome these spiritual barriers that work against every unbeliever coming to salvation. But it gets worse!

B. External Barriers in the Life of Every Unbeliever That Fight Against Their Repentance from Sin and Faith in Jesus Christ

1. *Satan is an external barrier working against the salvation of all unbelievers.* Satan is the enemy of mankind and desires to see all men destroyed. He knows he is doomed and labors to drag as many to hell with him as possible. The Scriptures below affirm that Satan is working against the salvation of unbelievers.
 - a. The Parable of the Sower Given by Jesus – **Mt. 13:1-9** That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. 2 And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. 3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 “Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. 6 “But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 “Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. 8 “And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. 9 “He who has ears, let him hear.”
 - b. The Parable of the Sower Explained by Jesus – **Mt. 13:18-23** “Hear then the parable of the sower.
 - (1) 19 “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.
 - (2) 20 “The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.
 - (3) 22 “And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the

worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

(4) 23 “And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

- c. Jesus Tells the Parable of the Tares and the Wheat – **Mt. 13:24-30** Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 “But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. 26 “But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. 27 “The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ 28 “And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ 29 “But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 ‘Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ”
- d. Jesus interprets the Parable of the Tares and the Wheat – **Mt. 13:36-43** Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” 37 And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, 38 and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. 40 “So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. 41 “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, 42 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43

“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

- e. **II Cor. 4:3-4** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- f. **Eph. 2:1-3** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.
- g. **I Tim. 5:11-15** But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married, 12 thus incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge. 13 At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention. 14 Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach; 15 for some have already turned aside to follow Satan.
- h. **II Tim. 2:24-26** The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.
- i. **I Jn. 3:7-12** Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His

seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. 11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

- j. **I Jn. 5:19** We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.
- k. Speaking to the church of Philadelphia Jesus says in **Rev. 3:9**, 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.
- l. **Rev. 12:9** And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

We can see from the various texts above that Satan is working against unbelievers coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Can a Christian defeat Satan with worldly wisdom? Can he defeat Satan with evidences and proofs? Whatever method of evangelism we use, it must be more powerful than Satan himself!

- 2. *Demons are an external barrier against the salvation of all unbelievers.* Demons are fallen angels. Satan is their leader and often the work of demons is attributed to Satan. Below we will consider some of what the Bible says about demons and their efforts to keep men from salvation in Jesus Christ.
 - a. There are many instances of demon possession in the gospels. Demon possession is when one or more demons take total control of an unbeliever from within. Demon possession was obvious and prevalent in Jesus' time, but today, it is either not so prevalent or demons do not reveal themselves as they did in the first century.

- b. **I Cor. 10:19-21** What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.
- c. **I Tim. 4:1-3** But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.
- d. **James 3:13-15** Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.
- e. **Rev. 9:20-21** The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; 21 and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

In the Scriptures above we see how demons use unbelieving men to promote false doctrine and false religions. Though the Word of God does not explain exactly how demons use men to promote false religion, it does make it clear that false religion is demonic religion. Whatever method of evangelism we use, it must be powerful enough to overcome demonic opposition.

- 3. *Unbelievers are an external barrier against the salvation of all unbelievers.* Being the pawns of Satan and demons, unbelievers are often used by Satan to keep people from salvation. Even apart from satanic or demonic influence, every unbeliever is still a lover

of sin and will often tempt others to follow them into their sin and away from the truth of the gospel.

- a. **Mt. 23:15** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.
- b. **I Cor. 15:33** Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.”
- c. **I Thess. 2:14-16** For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, 15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, 16 hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.
- d. **II Tim. 2:16-18** But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.
- e. **II Pet. 2:1-3** But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.
- f. **Jude 10-13** But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. 11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error

of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. 12 These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

So as we can see, unbelieving men are also very active in working against the truth. They tempt, lead astray, deceive, oppress and use peer pressure, ridicule, or intimidation to hinder people from coming to Christ. Thus whatever method of evangelism we use, it must be able to overcome the efforts of unbelieving men to keep sinners from being saved.

4. *The grim summary of every unbeliever apart from the grace of God might be summarized as follows.*
 - a. Unbelievers are spiritually dead.
 - b. Unbelievers can't understand the things of God.
 - c. Unbelievers never seek God.
 - d. Unbelievers are repelled by the light because they love darkness.
 - e. Unbelievers are futile, darkened, corrupted, etc., in their thoughts and therefore cannot objectively weigh evidence or consider the gospel.
 - f. Unbelievers are hindered by Satan from coming to Christ.
 - g. Unbelievers are hindered by demons from coming to Christ.
 - h. Unbelievers are hindered by other unbelievers from coming to Christ.

Now we have a clear view of unbelieving mankind and the hopeless condition they are in. The unbeliever is not only sealed up in a dark coffin but Satan is standing on the lid to make sure the light of the gospel does not get through. Apart from God's saving grace men are truly lost and without hope. Understanding this, we are now ready to consider why

various, often-used methods of evangelism don't work and why they are unable to overcome the barriers between the unbelievers and Jesus Christ.

III. **INEFFECTIVE METHODS OF EVANGELISM CHRISTIANS USE**

Before looking at some of the common methods Christians often employ in evangelism that don't work, let me give this disclaimer. There is always the exception to the rule. Each of the methods below have been used by God to bring people to salvation. The methods themselves did not bring anyone to Christ, but they have been the basis of building friendships or promoting discussion so that God's method could be used. For encouraging Christians or promoting discussion the methods below are fine, but they don't save anyone.

- A. **Rationalistic Approach to Evangelism** is the approach that says reason is the source of knowledge independent of, or apart from experience. An example might be using your reason to ask yourself, "*Does God exist?*" If you say, "*No*" - you might ask yourself why? Then think to yourself, "*The fact that I am even discussing God shows that God might exist. We are rational beings. We obviously didn't come from nothing. So there must be a God. Reason proves to us that God exists.*" This is all possible but something is missing – the means of salvation. The rationalistic approach makes several presuppositions:
1. Man's ability to reason is unaffected by sin.
 2. Man is able to verify truth through reason and intellect.
 3. Logic and reason compel a person to accept the claims of Scripture.
 4. We must rationally understand in order to know the truth.
 5. Does this method overcome the internal and external barriers which keep unbelievers from coming to Christ? Why or why not?
- B. **Naturalistic Approach to Evangelism** says that physical nature is sufficient to explain God and the truth-claims of Christianity. An example might be some arguments from creation science: "*How could anyone deny the existence of God? Obviously it can be seen in creation and what*

has been made that there is design and purpose in creation. The fossil record proves there was a flood. Different earth time clocks prove the earth is only 6-10 thousand years old. How could all the planets orbit around the sun year after year if God was not holding them in place?"

This method is similar to the rationalistic approach but instead of trusting in one's own thought and intellect, one trusts in observations made in creation and physical science. This method also has presuppositions:

1. God's creation is compelling evidence that God exists.
2. By observing creation we can understand that God exists and come to believe in Him.
3. The mind of man is not corrupted but functioning and able to sort through the physical data without bias.
4. We must first verify truth before we can believe in it.
5. Problems with this approach are apparent. The Bible teaches that creation does not compel men to believe, it only serves to condemn them. Men look at God's creation and suppress the truth in unrighteousness. This method fails to overcome the barriers between unbelievers and salvation.

C. **Historical Approach** uses rational historical information, events of the past, to validate the truth claims of Christianity through extra-biblical historical proofs. An example might be: *"Josephus, the Jewish historian, talks about Jesus, hence, Jesus must have existed. The early church fathers claim some of the same things as do the Scriptures so the Scriptures must be true. Different ancient writings verify that certain parts of both the Old and New testaments are true and hence, they can be trusted."* Thus historical facts or "presumed facts" are used to arrive at salvation by extra-biblical historical analysis. Presuppositions in this method are:

1. We must historically verify the Bible before we can believe it.
2. Extra-biblical, historical proofs compel one to come to the conclusion that God exists and Christianity is true.

3. Unregenerate man is able to truthfully weigh historical proofs in an unbiased way.
4. The historical records of men can be trusted above the Scriptures and used to judge the Scriptures.
5. Does this approach overcome the barriers we have learned about already? Is the Bible only true if history recorded by men says it is true? Do historical evidences compel people to believe the Bible? What is the difference between history recorded in the Bible and history recorded by men?

D. **Empirical Approach to Evangelism** is an approach that says the only true source of knowledge is what we experience with our five senses. Similar to a naturalistic approach, the empirical approach is looking for physical clues to lead people to Christ. An example might be: *“Science is able to prove by measurable phenomena that the earth is about 6 thousand years old. Therefore, the Scriptures must be true. The medical profession can prove by blood analyses that all humans are related. Therefore, we know that the story of Adam and Eve must be true. When I pray I feel the presence of God, I feel the peace of Christ, therefore I know God exists and the Bible is true.”* Presuppositions in this method are as follows:

1. The physical can prove the spiritual realities.
2. Measurability and repeatability (science) provide compelling evidence that God exists, the Bible is true, leading people to salvation.
3. Our senses are unbiased and able to determine truth from error.
4. Again the problems are apparent. Supernatural events cannot be proven by scientific method. Our senses are corrupted and biased. Unbelievers are not objective. The empirical or scientific method cannot overcome the barriers between unbelievers and Christ. The Bible says you must first repent of your sin and believe in Jesus Christ so that you can know the truth.

E. **Pragmatic Approach to Evangelism** says that truth is determined by the practical consequences of ideas. Example: *“We have discovered that*

those who pray have more peace in their life and feel closer to God than those who don't. This proves the Bible is true because we have experienced what the Bible says will happen when we pray. Or, we have done a survey and discovered that more Christians have happy marriages than non-Christians. This proves the Bible is true and if it is true then God exists." Presuppositions in this method are:

1. If it works, it must be true.
2. The means justify the end.
3. Man, his ideas, and their consequences compel one to believe that God exists, leading them to salvation.
4. The problem with this view, like the others, is that it fails to acknowledge that saving truth comes from God on the basis of faith, not experience. It also fails to acknowledge that experiences can't be trusted and are often deceptive and interpreted incorrectly. Satan is willing to provide us with experiences in order to deceive us. Experiences are also unable to overcome the barriers that keep unbelievers from coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Thus we can see that the various methods surveyed above, methods which many Christians have and still use, fail to overcome the barriers which exist between the unbeliever and salvation in Christ. These are the methods Christians often naturally turn to, but they are not the method prescribed in the Word of God. In the next lesson we will see how God has chosen to save sinners and why.