**LOCAL MISSIONS 2: AVOIDING PITFALLS**

***Acts 2***

Sunday School Lesson

*Understanding Missions*

Week 8 – 6/17/2018

**Introduction:** As we continue to look at our direct responsibility to the mission of the Gospel, we are going to focus our attention this week on things in our lives that can prevent us from carrying out the mission. From the beginning of our series on missions, we learned that the mission of the Gospel is to be our number one objective. We cannot please the Lord like we should if we are not active in delivering the good news of salvation to those around us. With this in mind, we ought to constantly be on guard for anything that hinders our efforts in sharing the Gospel.

1. SIN HINDERS US FROM SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS. (I CORINTHIANS 15:34)
2. **Notice that sin only brings death with it. A witness is supposed to bring life (James 1:15).** The Bible tells us that sin brings death when it is finished. As Christians, we are supposed to take eternal life to this world. How can the messengers of life dwell in death? While I am not sure how others would feel, it would be somewhat unnerving to me to find that the delivery nurse in the hospital was also the town’s undertaker. The book of James continues by showing us what it means to have dead faith. The Bible says that dead faith is a result of no works for God. When we live in sin, we kill our faith. This does not mean that we are now unsaved, but it does mean that we are showing a dead faith to the world. We will certainly not be true witnesses if we are carrying dead faith with us.
3. **Notice that sin makes the Christian servant to it (John 8:34).** Jesus tells us in John 8:34 that whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. We need to understand that sin has a way of taking control in our lives. When it settles in, there is no time for anything else but to continue serving that sin. If we are being a servant to sin, we don’t leave ourselves any time to serve the Lord. Additionally, the Bible tells us that we cannot serve two masters. Eventually, we will either love the one or hate the other. The more that sin abounds in our life, the further we get away from being a witness of Jesus Christ. Sin will never lead you to being a greater witness for Jesus. It just continues to starve the spiritual man and feed the flesh. Sin is the fulfillment of your fleshly desires. The more you eat the more of it you will crave to have.
4. **Notice that someone in sin will not genuinely reprove the sins of others. (John 16:8; Genesis 3).** The only time that a person living in sin reproves the sins of another is for the purpose of covering up or justifying their own sins. They do not reprove anyone out of a genuine concern for another’s behavior. Sin likes to stay hidden. Adam and Eve hid themselves in the garden from the face of the Lord. Men are lovers of darkness because their deeds are evil. When a Christian is living in sin, he does not want to be a witness to others because that would require him to reprove someone else for their sins. He knows that his life is not what it should be, so he does not bring up sin. It is much easier if he just stays quiet and goes through the motions. Jesus Christ said that He came to reprove mankind of sin. It is through the reproof of sin that one is able to see his need of salvation. Peter and the disciples were on the boat instead of being a witness because they had not dealt with their own sin of unbelief.
5. **Notice that sin causes us to forget the message of Christ (2 Peter 1:8-10).** In 2 Peter, the Bible tells us that he that is unfruitful has forgotten the forgiveness of Christ. The more that we continue in our sin the more we neglect the grace and mercy that Jesus Christ showed us on the cross. After a period of time, it becomes easy to remain silent as a witness, as you are rarely thinking about what Jesus Christ did for you. Your main focus is just a continual fulfilling of the flesh. You have so many unconfessed sins in your current life that you barely remember that your sins are covered under the blood of Jesus Christ.
6. SECULAR THINKING HINDERS US FROM SHARING THE GOSPEL. (PHILIPPIANS 2:5)
7. **Notice that the Gospel is for the common man. You can share it (Acts 4:13).** One of the common thoughts that people make regarding our witness is that one has to have a special set of traits in order to be successful at it. While this thought might apply to the world’s activities and responsibilities, God has a different plan for the sharing of the Gospel. Jesus used ordinary men to be his first disciples. If you are capable of being saved, than you are capable of telling someone else how to be saved. It really is that simple. There are countless examples throughout history of Christians who were a great witness in a community, and they wouldn’t have checked all the boxes of what we think they should be as a witness.
8. **Notice that the Gospel is offensive to some. You can’t hide it (Matthew 15:12-14).** The thought today in the world is to avoid talking with strangers about anything that is controversial or potentially offensive. In Matthew 15, the disciples asked Jesus if He had realized that He had offended the religious leaders. Of course, He knew that they were offended. In spite of this, He continued preaching to them. He told His disciples that He was not worried about those that were living in blindness. The average Christian today is too concerned regarding whether a person is going to get upset. While we ought not look to offend, we cannot back down from what the Bible says. It is still the Truth today, and there are still people who need to hear it.
9. A LACK OF SPIRIT LEADING HINDERS US FROM SHARING THE GOSPEL. (ACTS 8:29)

1. **Notice that Jesus emphasized the necessity of the Spirit in our witnessing efforts (Luke 24:48-50).** Before Christ ascended into Heaven, He charged His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit had come upon them. In Luke 24, He refers to the Holy Spirit as the power from on high. Although the disciples had a general understanding of Jesus’ teachings and what to do, they needed the Holy Spirit to help them have a better understanding and to lead them where they ought to go. It is interesting to note that Jesus preferred for them not to witness than to witness without the Spirit of God. What a strong indicator of the importance of the Holy Spirit!
2. **Notice that the Spirit draws us to witness of Christ. If we don’t, we are quenching the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3**). The Holy Spirit compels the Christian to testify of the things of Christ. The Bible tells us this in I Corinthians 12 and throughout the book of Acts. If we are not being a witness like we should, then that means that we are actively resisting the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As we resist the Spirit of God, the Bible tells us that we then can grieve His Spirit. He wants to testify of Christ and see lost sinners saved. It grieves the very Spirit of God when a sinner is condemned to Hell. When the Spirit is grieved, we ultimately quench Him in our lives. We stop hearing Him speak and lead us in the direction that we should go.
3. A LACK OF SENSITIVITY HINDERS US FROM SHARING THE GOSPEL. (MATTHEW 9:37-38)

1. **Notice that Jesus was moved with compassion at the number of the multitude (Matthew 9:36).** Everywhere that Jesus went, He was constantly aware of the souls of man. He was sensitive to their physical and spiritual needs. He never just went anywhere without doing a work for God. As Christians, we must understand that we cannot turn our compassion on and off. We either have compassion for others, or we do not. If we have it, we will carry it with us everywhere that we go. We will take it to work, to the store, to the ballpark, and to the restaurant.
2. **Notice that an abundance of sin, secular thinking, and lack of Spirit leading all help to desensitize the Christian (Hebrews 12:1).** To summarize, we should understand that a lack of sensitivity to the souls of man does not occur overnight. It grows and flourishes through our sinfulness. As sinfulness abounds in our lives, we think more and more secularly. Additionally, the Spirit of God is resisted and quenched. When these things take place, we find ourselves in a position where we are only living for ourselves and have become oblivious to the lost condition of others.

**CONCLUSION**: We must do everything that we can to make sure that we do not allow anything to hinder our mission. We must guard and protect it, as we understand that it is of the utmost importance. We must carry it with us everywhere we go, and we must be willing to fight against Satan himself to keep the mission going. As Christians, let’s not allow ourselves to become careless with that mission that God has trusted us with. Do not wait for someone else to be the one to share the Gospel with the world. Be a light in your community!