

**Subject: *The Biggest Obstacle to Evangelism***

**Scripture: *Matthew 10:16-31***

Let's review where we have been:

- ✓ A Passion for the Gospel
- ✓ The Overlooked Key to Evangelism (The Law)
- ✓ The Forgotten Word in Evangelism (Repentance)
- ✓ The Real Heartbeat of Evangelism (Compassion)
- ✓ The Important Work of Evangelism (Fishing for men)

And the message today is:

- ✓ The Biggest Obstacle to Evangelism (fear)

In this passage Jesus told His disciples what to expect and He told them how to react. He knew they would have to overcome fear. The greatest obstacle to evangelism is fear. Dr. Bill Bright said that only 2% of all Christians share the gospel on a regular basis. Why not? Many are afraid. They are intimidated. The icy fingers of fear paralyze us and we just can't say what we need to say. I want to start by saying it is a problem we all face.

### **1. The Reality of Fear**

- Jesus told the apostles not to fear ("fear not" in vs. 26, 28, 31).
- Before the crucifixion Peter was afraid and denied Christ
- After the resurrection the apostles were afraid and hiding behind closed doors
- Paul admitted his fear in *1 Corinthians 2:3* And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.
- Timothy was afraid because Paul wrote in *2 Timothy 1:7* For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

We all battle fear and we are not alone.

### **2. The Reason for Fear**

Jesus said this world hated Him and it will hate us.

- Rejection (Mt. 10:12-15)
- Persecution (Mt. 10:16-20)
- Death (Mt. 10:21-22)

Some of these things applied only to the apostles, but in principle they apply to all believers in every generation. People don't want to be confronted with their sin. They don't want to be reminded of death and judgment. Many don't want to accept that there is only way to Heaven. Many don't want to hear about Heaven or Hell because they are so preoccupied with the world. The reason for fear is obvious. We are living in a hostile world. We say things that are not popular.

### **3. The Removal of Fear**

- We must replace fear with faith, *Proverbs 29:25* The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe. The fear of man is a trap, a dangerous thing. Trusting God is a refuge, a blessed thing. Jesus told His apostles to trust God completely (Mt. 10:29-31).

- We must fear God rather than man, **Matthew 10:28** And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
- “We fear man so much because we fear God so little.” - William Gurnall
- We must replace weakness with power, **Acts 1:8** But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
- We must replace backwardness with boldness
- **Acts 4:13** Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.
- **Acts 4:29** And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.
- **Acts 4:31** And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.
- Boldness – Greek, *parresia*, means “to be frank, open, plain-spoken.” Boldness is the freedom to say everything that needs to be said. It is the same word found in **Hebrews 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

How do we remove fear? There’s only one way—through prayer and the Word of God. We replace fear with faith and trust. We replace our weakness with His power. We replace our backwardness with His boldness. We replace our thoughts with His thoughts. As we fear Him more, we fear men less.