



Obstacles on the Road to Christ: Cynicism

Well after traveling many miles, this time on a road trip through about 13 states, my daughter tells me—I was driving, she was counting—I can tell you sincerely it is good to be back home in Southern California. I can say that sincerely. It was interesting as you go, you know on a driving trip like that, and you stop at places where you actually interact with people from all these different states, and they see your license plate or they ask you where you're from, 'cause they know you're not from there, and they start with all their California stories. We got a California story. Oh, you're from California. All the crazies live out in California. I heard the word "crazies" a lot. They talk about our politics, they talk about the problems, the drought. They talk about the earthquakes—so earthquakes, what's that like? I heard all that. (1:17)

Occasionally they bring up the weather, and if they don't I try to, because it's so much better than theirs. And then everybody will end talking about the beach, if someone has a beach story. And this one guy starts talking to be about, "Oh, when I was in California the weirdest thing happened. I was out there in the beach swimming and all the water started, like, rushing out to sea. It's a thing called a riptide." Oh, yeah, I've heard of that. And it was just amazing how he talked about a big drama in his life, and he had to be rescued and he told me this whole story. (1:47)

You know, as I was thinking about it, you know having grown up here in Southern California, of course I've been caught in many riptides out there in the ocean, never had to be rescued, but when he was telling me this story of being rescued out there I thought of the instructions I always got as a little kid growing up that if you have to be rescued you'd better be careful how you get rescued. Because when the, you know, lifeguard or whoever comes out to try and save you, you'd better be responsive to his leadership. As a matter of fact, you'd better stop trying to rescue yourself. Stop trying to swim and thrash about. You just need to let the rescuer do his work. That's what he's there to do. You don't climb up on him. You've got to let the rescuer do his work. And I thought about, as he's telling me this story, the response of the one who is drowning to the one that is rescuing him, I mean, that's a life or death situation. I mean the response that you have when the rescuer comes to rescue, I mean, it makes all the difference in the world whether or not you are going to survive. (2:41)

Course, that has been a bit of the theme we've had in the first ten chapters of Luke as we've been working through that book for the past couple of years. And we've seen that Christ has come to rescue people, but a lot of people don't even know they have a problem and he tries to reveal that problem in his preaching. And certainly part of what we see that seems so phenomenal in the Book of Luke is he's continually flashing his credentials that he is the rescuer. I have the credentials to do this. I'm not just your normal prophet, I'm just not your normal person. I'm here with a kind of quality of life in that I am God in human form, and I have the ability to come and rescue you from your sins. But you have to stop trying to rescue yourself. You have to trust me implicitly. You have to have this kind of response to me that is required. And what we've seen through the Book of Luke so far is a clear designation of Christ as the savior, and about the call to repentance and faith. It's been very clear. (3:34)



Now we reach in our study this morning a transition in the Book of Luke. Luke 11:14. Well we start in verse 14 and we see a major transition. Now, it doesn't start at verse one of a chapter, so you may say, well, how can it be that big of a transition. Well, it is. We've seen one of the transitions historically of Jesus moving his ministry from the northern part of Israel in Galilee to the southern part in Judea, and we saw that happen just in the last chapter or so. And then we have in the first 13 verses of Luke, we had that whole discussion and teaching on prayer; very important, very helpful. (4:09)

Now in verse 14, you could be reading this through, and if you're just a casual reader or you're doing your daily Bible reading with us and you get to this part—I mean, you don't really realize there's a major transition because we've got something we've seen already in the book, and that is Jesus it looks like showing his credentials. And earlier in the book as he deals with the demonic spirits in the first century there that have wreaked havoc in people's lives, we say, well, and we drew the conclusion, he certainly is the sovereign one with all power, to speak words and be able to direct even the most wicked and heinous spirit. He is the Lord. He is sovereign, he is powerful, you gotta trust him, and you ought to believe that he has the power to save. We got all that from previous exorcisms, if you will, in the book. (4:53)

So you read this, starting at verse 14 as you glance at it, and you say, oh, here he again casting out a demon, and you may miss what's beginning here in this verse. And that is we're not just recapitulating the historical things that Jesus did in the northern ministry in his earthly ministry. What we're seeing here is the spotlight shift. We're seeing the spotlight shift, not from "look at what Christ is and look at what Christ does, and look at he is someone who is worthy to be trusted and to save you from your sin." That's not what was happening here. We're starting, as has been advertised, if you've had any anticipation for this series, eight sequential texts in Luke that will show us now, the spotlight shifts as we kind of re-go through these things that Christ does and teaches, and what we're now gonna to focus on is the response that people have. And for the next eight sequential texts what we have is a negative response, a bad response, a disastrous response, a catastrophic response. All of these are in the category of how not to respond to Christ. (5:48)

If you want to look at the rescuer coming to save you, here's how you don't respond to Jesus Christ. And I've given these one word, hopefully intriguing titles as you've read through the overview of the next eight weeks. Intriguing titles that make you think, okay well, here's something I want to understand the problem. Because if you respond the way that we're gonna see in this text to Christ, it creates a barrier. It doesn't help your relationship with Christ. Matter of fact, it prevents Christ from doing what he came to do. It's going to keep him at arm's distance, if you will. And we want to identify those, especially as ambassadors of Christ. I want us to look at this in two ways in the next eight weeks. We are representing in our generation Christ to our culture. We're gonna go out and talk to our neighbors, our coworkers, our extended family, about what it means to follow Christ, and they're going to respond. And we need to be ready to see these kinds of responses, these eight responses that we're gonna study, and say, I identify it. And more than just identifying it, we're going to look at how Christ responded to each of those, and hopefully we're going to learn something about here's how I respond when someone responds this way to Christ. I want to be able to respond to their reaction. And so hopefully we're gonna learn in that regard. (6:56)

But know this. There are vestiges of these eight responses in our own lives that still pop up from time to time in how we respond to Christ, even in our daily walk with Christ. If you're a Christian, I assume many of you are. You put your trust in Christ, you have a real relationship with the living God through Christ, you know him, you walk with him, you pray to him, and in that relationship you'll find these eight negative responses still pop up. And we need to learn to identify them in our own lives. (7:24)

Now you've seen the title here. One word title for the next eight times. This one we called "Cynicism", and I want to say that up front so that you can see it in this text. Of course a cynic is someone who's not just a doubter, and he's not just a skeptic. A cynic looks at someone and assumes the worst. The cynic is someone who thinks that everyone's got an angle, everyone's a con-man, everyone's, you know, they may appear to be good, but really they're not. And if you've ever tried to present Christ to our cynical world, you know they're quick to throw religion and Christianity under the bus really quick, really fast. So, let's take a look at this text, let's see the response, that's where the focus is, and then how Jesus is gonna deal with the cynics in this text. (8:04)

Verse 14. We're gonna read verses 14 through 23. Hopefully the text is in front of you there, follow along as I read it in the ESV. Verse 14. Now when he was casting out a demon that was mute—which is shorthand for saying that was the malady, the problem that was caused in the person when the demon took inhabitation in this person; not that the demon was mute, the demons, you know, certainly can communicate and they do communicate with one another and not in a sonic way, but certainly intellectually. But in this man, when this demon got a hold of this guy's life, one of the evidences of his messed up life was he couldn't talk. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke—so there was an evident way to see that Christ had done something miraculous in this guy's life—and the people marveled. Now we've seen that, we've studied it. (8:52)

Which, by the way, if that's a new phenomenon to you, you're new to the church or you haven't ever thought about this, flip your worksheet over, it was in your bulletin, and I've provided some sermons in the past here that will help you think it through it. If you're already going, oh, this is crazy, you know, spiritism and I don't get all that—the first three in the box there of past messages is really from Compass Night on Thursday nights in study of angelology or demonology, when we're dealing with what are demons, what do they do, how do they interact with people, how did they in the Bible, how do they today. Take time to go through those 90-minute lectures, and hopefully learn what the Bible has to say about this topic. The next two after that I think deal with this pattern of Christ coming in and changing people's lives 'cause he deals with the underlying spiritual problem of demonic activity. That's there. So if that's new to ya, I know this sounds like bizarre stuff, but, you know, five or six hours working through those with me. It's all free on our Focal Point website, or you can go to pastormike.com, download to those your device, and listen to those. So. You wanna know about that? We're not gonna preach on that today. Just gonna say this is another instance of him delivering someone demonic activity, and people were going, wow, that's amazing. Except there were some cynics in the crowd. Note it carefully. (10:00)

Verse 15. Some of them said—you should say, could use the conjunction here "but"—The people marveled. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons." Now, we need that last phrase, "the prince of demons", but they didn't because Beelzebul was the way the Jewish folks liked to respond, or I should say liked to refer to Satan, the spiritual ultimate, most powerful enemy of God. Beelzebul, if you don't have a study bible or a note on this in your Bible, just a quick review of this. Beelzebul, or Baal, B-a-a-l, Baal, zebul; *zebul* in Hebrew is the word like, um, "of the palatial dwelling". So *Baal* is the god of Ekron of the Old Testament, the Caananite god, "the god of the palatial dwelling". That's how the pagans looked at their idol, Baal. Well, the Jews mocked that in 2 Kings, and they called it Beelzebub. You've heard that, Beelzebub? Beelzebul, Beelzebub. *Bub*, now, is kind of a play on words that's close to the same spelling, but that is "flies", "the flies". So they said, well, your god of the palatial dwelling's not the god of the palatial dwellings. Your god is a false god, and we'll just call him in a derogatory way, he's the god of the flies, which wasn't very nice. Well, it got even worse. Then they called him Beelzebel, if you've ever followed that around in the Bible. Beelzebel is even worse because they started with flies, but then they thought about what flies like to fly around, which is... poop. You didn't think I'd use the word poop this morning. There it is. They called him "god of the poop heap", "god of the dunghill", "god of poop". Which is not very nice, but that's what they said. Your god is no god at all. He's the god of bad stuff. Well, the Jews picked that up as kind of the moniker or the shorthand that the nickname for Satan. So, I don't know. That was probably unnecessary information, so. But if you want to know Beelzebul, why did they call him that, well there's a quick history. They prince of demons. (12:05)

While others—now you might want to bracket this because this we pick up a different response; we're going to deal with this down the way as the text is, as Luke tells us more about the people that kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. That's not what we're dealing with today. That's why, if you look at the outline on your worksheet we're skipping that verse, in verse 16, because he picks it up later in the passage to describe those people that want more miracles. These people don't want more miracles in verse 15. They're just saying, hey, you think you're some messiah coming in God's power? Nah, we think you're of the devil. That's the cynic. (12:40)

Now, verse 17. But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Hey, I don't think this make a lot of sense here, your accusation. Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. So if you're saying I'm casting out demons by the prince of demons, that doesn't make a lot of sense. And if Satan also is divided against himself the way you're accusing me of being, in cahoots with Satan, well then how is his kingdom gonna stand. He's got objectives and he's not meeting them if I'm here as an emissary of Satan reversing Satan's work. 'Cause that's what you're saying. You're saying I'm casting out demons by Beelzebul." (13:18)

Verse 19. If I cast out demons by Beelzebul by whom do your sons cast them out? Who do the Jewish people in that day cast them out? Now that wasn't a big practice but it was a practice, especially in the inter-testamental period. The writings between Malachi and Matthew, if you will, had reference to, and some of what we call the Old Testament pseudepigrapha, a group of writings that weren't canonical, they weren't biblical, they weren't inspired. But they would talk a little about this growing interest in trying to help people that were oppressed by demonic spirits. Now they weren't real good at it. Even the writings prove that they're trying to figure it all out. But they're out there trying to help people, and they realize this isn't just a biological illness, or

he wasn't just, you know, run over by a camel, this guy's got serious issues that seem to be spiritual. Well then they worked hard to try and help these people, and occasionally they did. Though as we learned in the Book of Acts, the sons of Sceva, there were all kinds of con-men, but there were also real exorcists, if you will, who did some things that were helpful from time to time. Hit and miss ratio was pretty low. But Jesus comes on the scene now and he's casting out these demons with a word, and he's saying, now if I'm doing it by Satan, what about your guys? Interesting question. Therefore if we call them to testify that they're working to do it and I'm doing it with a word, uh, they'd be your judges. They'd be on my side on this one. (14:35)

Verse 20. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons. If I'm really doing this by God, well then the kingdom of God has come upon you. There's big implications for that. When a strong man—now he tells a story for two verses, little parable—the strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, then his goods are safe. If someone like Satan has got someone and messed their lives up and he wants to protect that, he's come to kill, steal, and destroy, and he's really destroying someone's life, and he's the strong man with the captive here. He says, when one stronger comes and attacks him, he can overcome him, take away his armor in which he trusted, and he divides the spoils. He's the winner. So if I'm not of Satan I must be stronger than Satan because I'm destroying Satan's work in this act that I've just done. Now that's a big statement. And there's implications there that he's trying to underscore. (15:24)

Then he really drives it home in verse 23, Jesus does. Whoever is not with me is against me. So if you're gonna say I'm of Satan, well then clearly you're against me. And if even my logical response to you leaves you saying, well then I don't know who you are, well if you're not willing to join up with me, well then you're an opponent. Whoever does not gather, you're not going to build the kingdom with me, well then you're really working against me, you're scattering. Let's try and understand this. (15:47)

Verse 14 and 15. All we read here is that people are coming up and saying this good you're doing is bad work, it's badly motivated, evil motives, evil power. So we know there's the classic, cynical response. It doesn't tell us why they have that response. So allow me here, as number one on your outline, we:

1. Seek to understand the cynic

Jot that down if you would—as we seek to understand the cynic, if that's the first thing we want to do, allow me, if you would, as an expositor, to step outside the expository method here, and go to the rest of scripture and try and just, try and figure out now why would people act that way? Why would they do that? Where can we go in the Bible that shows us why people would look at someone doing something good and assume the worst? Why would that happen? Now, we know this from the gospel of Matthew in the northern ministry of Jesus in Galilee that the Pharisees were often at the forefront of yelling out that Jesus, though he seems to be doing good things, is in league with Satan and he's really an evil person. And it often says the Pharisees were the ones doing that. So that led me to say, okay, what does the Bible say about how the Pharisees looked to Christ, and why where they so cynical? (16:59)

So three things, A, B, and C on your outline. You see that there? Let's start with letter A and go

to a passage in Acts. Acts 5. Turn with me if you would to Acts 5. In Acts 5, you think through your Sunday school knowledge here, you know the apostles arrested, they're about to be flogged and released. Pharisees don't know what to do with them, but they're gonna have a discussion and a guy named Gamaliel's gonna step up and have a suggestion. Now usually with your Sunday school knowledge and my Sunday school knowledge, we end up thinking Gamaliel's a pretty smart guy because he seemed to diffuse the situation. I'm going to show you that he's not a smart guy at all. I mean he may have done something that seems very helpful, but all he's doing is kicking the can down the road when it comes to the apostles' claims regarding Christ. 'Cause here they are and they're stirring up this big, you know, following here. I mean, we're in Acts 5. Think about what you know about Acts 1 through 4. There's a lot happening here, and Peter's up there preaching and everybody's going, wow, Jesus is the Christ. And here is the council, the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leaders going, what do we do with this? (17:58)

So let's break into the middle of this in verse 35. Acts 5:35-39. Then he—let's figure out the pronouns; that's Gamaliel. Look back up and you'll see that's true—and Gamaliel said to them—look back up, you'll see that's the Sanhedrin, or the Jewish governing council. He says, Hey, men of Israel—talking to his colleagues there—take care now what you're about to do with these men. Who are these men? Peter and the apostles, those that were preaching in the name of Christ. Now here's his logic; follow it. For before these days Theudas rose up claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, those who followed him were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean—and we're not talking about Judas from the apostles here, we're talking about another Judas—about the time of the days of the census, he drew away many people after him. And you know what, what happened to him? He, too, perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So Theudas and Judas of Galilee, both of those movements when these important people rose up and a movement started, well, you know what? They came to nothing. (19:04)

Verse 38. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from Peter and these apostles, these men, these preachers, these disciples. I mean, let's just back off here. Let them alone. For if this plan or this undertaking that they're all talking about and preaching about, if it's of man, if it's nothing, if it's like Theudas and Judas, well then it'll fail. It'll peter out just like the other ones did. But if it's of God, well, you know, you will not be able to overthrow it. And you might even be found opposing God. And they all stroke their Sanhedrin beards and go, "Hmm, eh, good idea. All right, yeah, good idea. Let's just whip 'em and let 'em go." And that's what they did. (19:43)

Now Gamaliel usually, in our little quick reading of the text, gets a gold star in our mind. Oh, that was good. That was wise. Was it wise? No, that's not wise at all. Really not wise at all. What if you're sharing the gospel with Gamaliel? Do you want him to say, "Weeelll, I don't know. There was other people that rose up and started a following. You know, there are a lot of religions out there, and lot of people following Buddha, and you know there's Hindus, and there's the Mohammed and the Muslims. I mean, I don't know. I mean, if it's true I guess when I die I mean, I'll figure out what's true. But you know, maybe it's just another one of these claims." You'd be frustrated. Why would he respond that way? Because he's looking at every other claim of some greatness and he's going, wasn't true, wasn't true, doesn't work out, that guy was a con, that guy was a fraud, that came to nothing, so this one... aah. Let's just let the jury stay out on this one. Ehh, just give it some time, we'll figure it out. If it's true it'll come to be true and everyone



will see it, and if not, ah, you know, it'll come to nothing. (20:46)

That kind of kick the can down the road is a kind of cynical response to the claims of the apostles and Christ because they have had con-men in the past. Letter A, if you're taking notes. Think about it in the twenty-first century. Some people, when you talk about Christ and the claims of Christ, they're gonna be cynical because

1-A. They have been conned.

They've been conned. In one way or another they've been exposed to some kind of con version, some kind of shyster version, of religion or Christianity or God. How many people do we share with in your workplace, you know, in the neighborhood, and they're pushing you back and they're referring to some experience they've had in the church they grew up in. Or in, you know, I was a part of this, this particular group, and I checked it out and it was all phony. And, you know, I was in this church and this leader, he was a jerk and, you know, he was a fraud and a phony, and he was just in it for the money, and he was stealing from the church. They look at experiences in religious pockets in the past and they go, "I'm having a hard time considering the claims of your Christianity that you're presenting to me because I've seen a lot of con-men." (21:49)

And by the way, let me give you a little sympathy here, and try to generate some sympathy, because all you have to do is to look. Pretend you're not a Christian and turn on and watch Christian TV for the next 24 hours. If you can survive it. Just try. And sit there and say, "I'm going to pretend I'm a non-Christian, and I'm gonna watch 24 hours of religious broadcasting on religious TV." And then I'm gonna sit back as a reasonable person and listen to all that, and then I'm gonna have someone walk up to me with the real gospel and share it with me. I'm, I'm not—I don't want to hear it. I'm gonna look at it as full of commen and shysters and liars. I just think, oh, had enough. Not everybody, but I'm saying a lot of them. Just Google "religion". Google "God". And just, if you're looking at people who are not saved, who are not Christians, who are not disciples of Christ, you have to have some sympathy that they're looking at your claim of relating to the invisible God, getting your sins forgiven, whatever that is, and they're going, I just I don't want to hear it. I don't wanna buy it. (22:50)

That's a kind of mindset that we can sympathize with, but I don't want to ever think that's the right response. Because Gamaliel, let's think about it. If Gamaliel is the cynic who wants to kick the can down the road, what should his response have been? Maybe more like what we read about later in the Book of Acts, where King Herod Agrippa II says to Paul, "You're claiming a God thing and resurrection, and Messiah? I'd like to hear your case. Bring it forward. Let's hear it." And at least he gives Paul a chance to come in and talk about the prophetic fulfillments from Old Testament to New Testament; the claim of the resurrection and why it fits with God's goals. I mean he starts to preach to him and lay out the case. Gamaliel didn't even want to hear the case. I mean, the wise thing would be to bring in the apostles and say, now give me your best presentation of this. But he doesn't do it. Why? Well, I can only look at the text and say Theudas and Judas were part of his thinking and he had a lot of con people in the past. Con-men in the past. (23:44)



So, cynic may in your life, in the twenty-first century, have been conned. Maybe you have been conned. Maybe one of the reasons you don't even respond rightly to what's going on in church today is because your past experiences at church. And so you're doing a lot of this because I've had some bad experiences in the past. Be careful that because of your past, being burned in some situation, you don't bring cynicism into your relationship with God, into the structure of things that God has put in life. Whether it's obedience or church fellowship, or ministry, and say, "Well, I'm not really into that because, uh, I've seen it not work out in the past." Understand the cynic. Understand the cynic in you. Recognize there's always gonna be phony's out there. 2 Peter 2:1. There were false prophets in the Old Testament, there are gonna be false teachers in the New Testament times. So we're just gonna have to realize that's a part of it. There's always gonna be con jobs out there. (24:36)

Letter B. Thinking biblically now, not textually in this text, but biblically throughout the rest of Scripture. Why would people ascribe the work of God to the work of Satan? And why would they be so quick to be cynical and attribute bad motives to Christ? Let me give you another one. John 11. Turn there with me if you would. John 11. And again, I'm just starting with the Pharisees because I know the Pharisees, according to Matthew, were at the head of riling the crowd up to say he's not casting out demons by God, he's casting out demons by Satan. (25:09)

So let's look at this text. John 11:45-48. Now you know the context here. Word was out. Jesus was there in Bethany. He'd raised Lazarus from the dead. That's going to be on the front page of the paper, and everyone's talking about Christ. Many of the Jews therefore—verse 45, John 11:45—Many of the Jews therefore had come with Mary—this is Mary from Bethany—and seen what he had did, and they believed in him. They trusted in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done so that the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council—there's the Sanhedrin again, the council—and said, "What are we going to do?" Man, there's a lot of proof on the table now. This man performs many signs. I mean, there's evidence there. (25:56)

Here's their thinking, verse 48. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him and the Romans will come and take away both our place, this council, our authority that we have granted to us by proxy from the Romans, and they'll take away our nation. Who knows what might happen to Israel. Now think about the logic here. Their logic is, I don't want to look at the evidence of Christ. In this case he's raised someone from the dead. I mean, huh, everyone's going to believe in him. Well, wait a minute. What about you? Well, I can't. I mean, if I join the crowd what's gonna happen to our authority? What's gonna happen to our nation? (26:32)

Now we talk about that a lot from this platform. And that is when it comes to people objecting, objecting to the gospel and saying,, "I don't want to have anything to do with Christ," lot of times it really has nothing to do with their past experience, and it has nothing to do with the fact that they have questions that aren't answered. It comes down to the fact that they know the implications of this. They know that if I concede that Jesus is the Christ, then he is the Lord, then he is in charge, then he is the one who makes the rules and keeps me accountable. He is the authority and I'm accountable to him, and oh, that's gonna to really cramp my style. (27:05)

Matter of fact, think back to before you became a Christian. Most people struggled, at some



point, with counting the cost as Luke 14 says, and saying, what is this going to mean for my life if I concede that Jesus is the Christ? I'm going to have trouble with this. I'm going to have trouble because the things that I don't want to do it's gonna make me do, it's gonna require that I do. Things that I like to do, you know, I think these are okay. I know the Bible says they're not okay, and I know that Jesus wouldn't want to doing that. I don't want to get rid of that. (27:33)

Number two, or letter B. Let's put it this way. Another reason people are cynical about the gospel and about Christ is because

1-B. Maybe they're running from God.

Maybe these people that you're dealing with are running from God. What are they running from? Well, take the word God and think through what it means. They're running from the authority of God. They're running from the accountability of God. They'd rather have—maybe it's better to define in the inverse. They wanna live in the last verse of the Book of Judges. Do you know the last verse in the Book of Judges? Here it was, after all those bad things had happened for over four hundred years, it says this: "There was no king in Israel"—which is a poetic statement; it's not just true politically, it was true in their hearts. "They had no king"—they didn't look to any external authority—"but everyone did what was right in their own eyes." (28:20)

Now think about your non-Christian friends. You talk to them about their need to be rescued by Christ who's come to save them from the coming penalty of their sins. And they have a problem because they live in a culture—we live in it, too, but they're much more effected by it, I would hope, than we are—that's constantly saying just do whatever's right in your eyes. Don't let any external authority tell you what to do. Here's the problem. You respond to the gospel, it's gonna change all that. In other words, my cynicism toward Christ is nothing more than something that tries to maintain my autonomy, maintain the fact that I get to call the shots for me. You concede Christ, and you concede the message of Christ, and you look at what Christ has done and you say, no, he is the king, he is the boss, his credentials to save. He needs to be my savior, my king, my lord. Now all of a sudden I've lost my autonomy. (29:16)

Matter of fact, if you're taking notes, jot this reference down. We won't take time to turn there, but a good homework assignment is Psalm 2. The whole psalm. Starts with that rhetorical question, why did the nations rage? Why did the kings and the rulers get together and put themselves against the Lord and his anointed one, his messiah, his Christ? Why? Well, why? The next verse, verse 3, answers it. Because they want to break his bonds away. They want to break his fetters. And we live in a culture that says do whatever you want to do. Don't let anyone, just don't hurt anybody, but you're free to be whoever you want to be. You just, you just do whatever is right in your own eyes. Just don't bother anybody else. The Bible says no, not only can you not do whatever you want. Matter of fact, here is the holy God of the universe that's concerned about your thought life. You can't even have a thought privately without thinking, wow, is this in line with what God expects? I know I'm going to be held accountable to God. Think about that. People are running from God sometimes when they throw out things to you that sound very cynical. That say your church is probably just filled with con-men, and you're all duped. And, I don't know, this religion is built on a lie. And it's people trying to control the masses. And all that. People say that all the time. Often it's motivated by people running from God, God the



authority, God the one who holds us all accountable. (30:32)

To put it in the words of John 3, men love darkness rather than light. Remember this passage? After just saying to Nicodemus, God so loved the world that he sent his only son—you know the verse, the most famous verse in the Bible. After that he says what? You know, the problem with people embracing this, in being rescued by the loving God who sent a rescuer, why? Well, it's because they don't want to go into the light. Why? Because their deeds are evil, and they know that when they step into the light their deeds will be exposed as evil. So I'd rather not buy into all this. I'd rather throw rocks at real Christianity. Could be running from God. (31:07)

Number three. Let's think biblically, systematically, throughout the Bible. And when you write this third one down, when you write down letter C, you're gonna think, Aah. Just know this. There's probably a combination. Right? None of these stand on their own. It's a combination of the other two, and perhaps five or six, if we had more time to look from cover to cover in the Bible as to why people are cynical toward Christ. But jot it down anyway. Here it comes. Letter C, and I'll try to prove it to you, because they (31:32)

1-C. May need more information.

They may be cynical toward Christianity not because they're really at a place of running from God because God's at work on their heart. I mean, they really do, they're really being prepared internally. But, they're cynical still 'cause they don't have all the information. That's important for us to catch. Let me prove it to you, just have you write these down. We won't take time to turn to them. But Acts 17, 18, and 19. Acts—that's a big target. Acts—the seventeenth chapter in Acts, the eighteenth in Acts, the nineteenth chapter. And let me highlight four groups here, real quick. (32:09)

First one is the Areopagus. Paul is there before the professors in Athens at what was used to be called the old Mars Hill, where the professors met. He's giving them a lecture about the gospel, and he's telling them that we have a God, he has created us, we're accountable to him, we got a sin problem, he's created us to know him, we got to grope for him and seek him. And then he brings up the fact that we're all going to be held accountable and judged by the man, quote unquote, right, he's the God-man, the man Jesus Christ who God has appointed, verifying it by raising him from the dead. That's what's going on in Acts 17, and as soon as he starts to talk about the resurrection it says the crowd erupts and starts mocking him. So his preaching is over 'cause people are now mocking, and they're "away with this guy", and "he's crazy", "he's nuts". So they have a problem with the resurrection. And here's the last line appended to that statement, that the people are mocking him. And others, and others said we want to hear more on this. Now think about that. They're not ready to buy Christianity, they're not ready to become disciples of Christ. But they're not like the normal cynic. They may be skeptical but their cynicism is starting to give way because what they need is need more information. (33:18)

And I want to say this is true cynicism in a sense because it's like the guy who gets the random telemarketing calls about the free trip to Hawaii? Which used to be more believable. Now it's all computer generated: You have won a trip to Hawaii. I didn't believe it when it was a real person, but now it's like, you know. So my neighbor, he's hanging up on that like twenty times a month,



and so he doesn't believe there's any free trips to Hawaii. Like dad used to say, no free lunch. So he doesn't believe it. Then I go over to his door this afternoon and say, hey, I got a friend, he's—he wants to, just to give us a free trip to Hawaii. Soon as I say "free trip to Hawaii", he just, you know Pavlov's dog, he just starts doing this, trying to hang me up. He reacts like he wants me to shut up. But I got a real offer. And I got a friend, he's got a real condo in Kuaii or Maui or somewhere, and I really want him to have a free trip to Hawaii and I just out of the goodness of my heart want to offer it to him. Now it's cynicism. He thinks there's an angle here. He thinks I've got an angle, and my friend's got an angle, or it's a twelve hour timeshare presentation or something he's got to sit through. I don't know what he's thinking, but he's thinking it can't be as good as it sounds. That's cynicism. But really it may be that when I present this, there is a little sense of, well, let me hear more on this. He's ready, even though he wants to impugn the motives of the one giving him the good news, he's ready to hear more. We see that in Acts 17. (34:40)

We see it, too, in Acts 17 when Paul comes to the Bereans. He gives the message to the Bereans. They're not ready to buy it, they're not ready to become Christians. They're getting closer, God's working on their hearts. But they take what Paul says and they go and search the Old Testament scriptures, because Paul had said this was all predicted. And they're searching the scriptures everyday when Paul speaks to them to see if these things are true. They need to research and they want to go home and research it. (35:07)

Chapter 18. We meet a guy a named Apollos. Apollos comes and breaks on the scene, and he knows a lot. He doesn't know the whole story until it says Priscilla and Aquila, this team here that have been converted, they come and they say, we need to explain the way of the Lord more accurately to you. And they sit him down, and he's ready 'cause he needs more information. (35:31)

In the next chapter, the Ephesians, many of them, didn't get it. Paul shows up and he's talking to them about the indwelling spirit. Have you been converted in this New Testament way, like Ezekiel talked about where the Spirit of God is dwelling in you, and when you trusted and got baptized, did you receive the Holy Spirit? And their response was in Acts 19, we don't even know that there is a Holy Spirit. Talk about flunking Sunday school. They don't know. I don't know. I don't even know what is the Holy Spirit. So here are people that at least are willing to listen to the apostle Paul, but they don't have all the information. And they're willing to get it. There's four examples in three chapters of Acts where they need more information. (36:11)

Now that's the neatest experience, or at least the most favorable experience. And certainly we think Christ in some way thinks that part of this crowd needs more information 'cause he starts giving them information.

Back to our text, Luke 11:17-23. Skipping verse 16, we'll get back to it when this reprises later in the passage. Verses 17-23, Christ is gonna respond now. Which by the way is number two on your outline. We need to

2. Respond to the cynic.

Jesus responds to the cynic. And I'm not saying every last cynic in every situation, but Jesus



gives us a wise response to the cynics, and I want to just point out three simple things that we can learn from this text. (36:50)

Verse 17. But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them. So the first thing I know is he's going to respond to the cynicism. He doesn't just roll his eyes and say, "Phwew, crazies, cynics," and walk away. He's responding. Maybe because there's some amongst the cynics that need just more information. And there they are, hoping. Perhaps that's the case. But what I like about this, though I can't pattern my life after this because I can't be omniscient, I at least can look at Jesus' ability to look at their thoughts and know what they're thinking, and at least derive not only some comfort from that but an action step. In other words, when I deal with the cynic I don't know why he's so cynical. When I look at someone who's struggling with trusting in what God said, even in myself, the cynic in me, when I feel like I have a hard time believing this. Sometimes I don't know why. I certainly don't know why exactly in the mind of someone else. But I know this. According to the text, Jesus knows their thoughts. The psalmist said it very clearly. No one knows the thoughts of men but the Lord, the Lord knows. And 1 Corinthians, I mean, the man often knows the thoughts of his own head, but God certainly knows. (37:59)

Now when I think about my job, I just think about representing Christ in my neighborhood in my life in my generation, I am, according to 2 Corinthians 5, his ambassador. And as his ambassador I know that God's not there leaning over the rails of heaven going, "Let's see how Mike does this week." Not how it works. He's involved in the process to the extent, as Paul puts it, that it's as though God were making his appeal through me to tell the people in my world be reconciled to Christ. So I know this. I got a partner in this, if you will. That may sound blasphemous to some of people who are high Calvinist, but listen. God is partnering with me in my evangelism. I'm his ambassador and he's working with me, and I know this. When he's working with me in evangelism, and he's making his appeal through my mouth, not in some prophetic way with a capital P, but he is working with me to see people saved, he knows the thoughts of the person. He knows every reason why he says what he says. He knows the exact motivations why he is not willing to embrace the truth. (38:56)

So here's my action step. What I want to do continually in all my discussions with cynics, including myself, I want to pray. Put it down this way, Letter A. I want to respond to the cynic

2-A. Prayerfully.

Whether the cynic is me, or whether the cynic is a neighbor, or a coworker, or a family member, I want to make sure that I'm prayerful. I want to talk to the one who knows the thoughts of the person I'm dealing with. That may sound basic, but it's super important. (39:20)

When I was gone and got to sit through a sermon, one of the sermons I sat through on my break. The preacher was up there preaching from Hebrews 4. Great text, takes the Sabbath which is the picture of the covenant relationship between Israel and God, and it starts talking about that. The word Sabbath means rest, and he uses that word in the text of Hebrews 4. And he talks about how important that rest is. Not laying on a hammock with a lemonade, but finding that place where we have the favor of God and we are in that position where God has done the work, and



much like what we're talking about, he's rescued us. And he has rescued us and we are in favor. It's parallel to the rest of the people of the Israel. And back in Numbers when they were brought right up to the front door of the promised land, and God said, "Enter the rest. Enter the promised land. Enter that place of favor." And because of the spies, remember the 12 spies in the Book of Numbers? They go out, ten come back and say, "Can't take it. We're grasshoppers in their eyes. It's too big. The cities are fortified." So they disbelieve God, in the city of Kadesh Barnea there in the desert, and so they don't enter the rest. And God gets mad at them and says, "Well then, you're going to wander in the wilderness for 40 years." (40:31)

That great text is so strong in pointing the people who are listening to this homily, which is probably what the Book of Hebrews was at one time, and they were saying, "Listen, the rest really that God cares about is the one that we can enter into right now. The place of his favor. We can enter the kingdom. We can be a part of his covenant people. You need to enter that rest." And one of the things he does is quote Psalm 95, and he says even David looked at the entering of the promised land and he spoke of it as though it's still available. And that was, what, 600 years after the conquest? And he says, listen. You need to understand, and you need to recognize, that all of us need to be responsive to God leading us by faith through things that would make us think I don't want to enter the rest, and we need to trust him and enter the rest. We need to be rescued by God. So he quotes those passages and he says strive. Do everything you can to enter that rest. See to it that you enter the rest. (41:23)

And after quoting scripture, then he gives one of the most famous verses in that chapter. And he says this. The word of God is living and active and sharper than two-edged sword. It divides soul and spirit, and joint and marrow. It discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Now that's not meant to be a statement about our bibliology. It's meant to be a statement about "Listen to what I'm telling you." There is a rest that still is available, like David talked about in Psalm 95, and it is available. You need to enter it. And then the next verse, which we often just never see in context. But here—we don't often see it in context. Here's what he says. He says you just need to understand, to quote it word for word, that no creature is hidden from God's sight. We are all naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account. (42:10)

Now here's a statement about God knowing our thoughts and intentions. Here's a statement about God knowing everything that I'm thinking. And after telling people enter the favor, enter the kingdom, be a part of this thing, the Bible says you just had to remember this. God knows the thoughts. It was apparently important for the writer of Hebrews to remember that as he speaks to people about the claims of Christ, that he remembers that God knows the thoughts of the heart. When you present the truth, no matter what my excuse is, or my reaction is, or my cynicism might be, God's looking at all the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And he says here now, don't forget you're gonna be accountable to him, and he sees it all. No excuse will work with him on that day. This is a passage by the way, though it speak of words of rest and God's knowledge, and sovereignty, and omniscience, isn't meant to comfort it. It's meant to make us uncomfortable so that if we're not believing the words of God that we would because God's seeing your thoughts. (43:03)

We gotta respond to the cynic prayerfully, with truth. When truth is spoken it needs to be remembered that God knows the thought process, and because he partners with me and he's the

only one who can change hearts, and thoughts, and minds, I need to be praying to him. Even when I see cynicism in myself. Psalm 139, we read it in our daily Bible reading recently. That great line which says, Oh God, know my thoughts. Know my heart, try me and see if there's any wicked way in me. Why would I ever pray a prayer like that? Well, when I recognize that I don't believe God is good. You got a sermon last week about the goodness of God in Romans 8, did you not? If you were here, at least? That sermon. Why would we need an hour's worth of discussion about that? Don't we believe it? No, we often don't believe it. Now I didn't hear the whole message, but I know this. There's lots of reasons we start to doubt that, and whenever you doubt that you're impugning God's motives, are you not? He's promised that. He's promised that if you confess your sins he's faithful and just to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all righteousness. Well when you confess your sins, when you on the other end of that, doubt God's goodness to forgive you, you do understand that you're being a cynic? And you need to pray to God, God, I know you know the reasons I'm being cynical. I don't know what those are. But God, try me, know my thoughts. Look into my heart and my mind, and reveal that to me. There's nothing God wants more than when we're messing up, when we come to him saying "Show me how I'm messing up." He'd love to make that clear to us. Just like a good parent that wants to be clear with his kid about what he's doing wrong. God would love to make that clear to you. Pray to him. (44:35)

We might be cynical about whether it's worth obeying him. God says do this, do that, don't do this, and don't do that, all for our good and our sanctification. And sometimes we go, I don't even think it's worth it. Good guys finish last, it seems. I don't even know why I'm towing the line here at work and doing things ethically, and biblically, and morally, and the way Christians should do it. And you start to become a cynic. There's so many passages that remind us that there's a lot going on in our minds that need to be revealed, and God is willing to reveal those to us as we pray to him. Respond to the cynic in yourself and at your workplace prayerfully. Lot more we could say on that, but we spent several weeks in the first thirteen verses of Luke 11 dealing with prayer, so maybe that needs to be a bit of a review. (45:15)

But let's get into the heart of what Jesus says. Luke 11. Luke 11:17b, the second half of this, through 19. We've already talked it through. We won't spend much time here. But it says every kingdom divided against itself's gonna be laid waste. A divided household falls. If Satan is really the impetus for my casting out demons, well then it's stupid because he's fighting with himself. How's his kingdom gonna stand if I cast out demons by Beelzebul. If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, whom do your sons cast them out? Now this is a good argument. In responding to the cynic, Jesus responds, Letter B:

2-B. Logically.

Very logically. He wants to say, now, wait a minute. You've made a claim there. Let's think about this. Same thing I'd want to do to Gamaliel. Hey, Gamaliel, you want to kick the can down the road and say, well, let's just let this play out? What if it is of God? What if it is of God and you have no time to respond, or your kicking the can down the road closes the door for your entry into the kingdom? What if Christ did rise from the dead? Shouldn't you be his devoted follower? (46:14)



I mean there's so many things that we can say to the cynic that we should say, and we should say it the way that Christ said it, with a lot of rationality and a lot of logic. Does this many any sense? And just too look at how he responded to them, he looks at their own people doing something to try and help people that are demonically oppressed, and he says it's funny how you don't impugn their motives. How is it that when Christians gather together, help people get right, not only with God but with each other. When marriages are saved in the local church, or when we send missionaries to a foreign land and we bring them the gospel, and transform their culture, and do good in their lives, and we see things radically changed for the better. Why is that still impugned by non-Christians? Oh, oh, but the Peace Corps. is okay. And Unicef is okay. Right? And adopting a kid on some commercial's okay. But when the church does it, how is it that we're bad and we're con-men? When Christian organizations build hospitals to help people in the name of Christ, why is that when secular organizations build a hospital, how is it that you're not consistent in impugning their motives? Happens all the time. Christ is really getting to, in a very short summary of what he said here, to the problem of the logical inconsistencies in the cynic. (47:27)

Now again, I don't know what the cynical charge is in your discussion with non-Christians, but you better bone up on how to respond to those. And the best way to do that is to do some reading in apologetics. You know that word. Apologetics. 1 Peter 3:15-16. That great text that reminds us that we ought to be ready to give a response or make a defense to everyone who asks us. Now, make a defense is kind of unfortunately not as colorful a translation as the word in the original language helps to present. You may have heard this before. We get the word "apologetics", which is transliterated from Greek from the word in the Greek New Testament that translates the phrase, "make a defense". "Make a defense" comes from the word, *apologia*. We transliterate it "apologetics". I know it's not perfect, but it's close. *Apologia*. *Apo* is the Greek preposition "away from". *Logia* in this case is a verbal charge, someone is going to bring a charge against our faith. Could be a cynical charge, all of you are a bunch of con-men, it's all led by egomaniacs, or whatever. You made a charge against us. We need to get it away from us. We need to remove it. That's called apologetics. (48:37)

And it'd be better for us to take our reading patterns and say, instead of scanning the Google news for half an hour I'm gonna leave that aside, and I'm gonna go get some reading material that's gonna help me make a logical, rational defense for the hope of the gospel. Maybe it's time to be done with *People!* magazine, and start picking a book that can help us think through what it means to defend the Christian worldview. All I'm telling you is when you pick up an apologetics book—and I've helped you on the back. I always try to give you book recommendations every week. There's some there, there's some on angelology—you're not just helping yourself prepare for your next conversation with a cynical non-Christians. Trust me, you're helping yourself. Because the next time you have a cynical thought about is God really good, does God really answer prayer, how can God be good and there be evil in the world. All those things that circulate in your own mind, when you think I don't even know if it's worth it to do the right thing in this situation, you need apologetics. You need to think logically and rationally about why this hope exists, and why it is better to serve Christ even if everything else in my life falls apart because I'm serving Christ. That, I'm telling you, is something we need to do not just for the cynic out there, but for the cynic right here. (49:48)

You need to respond logically. And I know there's homework to do in that regard. You want a good example of the right response to the cynic, Acts 26. We don't have time to look it up. I often quote it. Paul's defense to King Agrippa II, and Festus is there. And Festus is the cynic with folded arms. He's the cynic that says, Paul you're out of your mind. You're crazy. Your great learning has driven you mad." But King Agrippa II, the great-grandson of Herod the Great from Matthew 2, here's King Agrippa in the Book of Acts going, "Weelll, I dunno. You're making some sense to me. Are you trying to persuade me to become a—I mean, I just want to hear what you believe. Now it feels like I can feel pressure to become a Christian." And Paul's sitting there just hammering. Now let's think about it. The prophets, the predictions, you know the prophets? Hey, none of this stuff that we're talking about has been done in a corner. You know what happened in Jerusalem, you've been up with the news here. Do you see the correspondence between the prophetic statements of the Old Testament and the New Testament time realities that you've just—come on, put this together in your mind, Herod. I love the logical, rational commitment to explain his faith in Christ. He even says it. Hey Festus, I'm not crazy. What I'm saying is true and rational. Good for us to be more true and rational in our own thoughts, and that really comes down to what you read and the lectures you listen to. Turn off your pop radio for a while and get a podcast that's gonna help you understand how to think logically through the gospel and the Christian worldview. That'd be helpful. (51:12)

Prayerfully. Logically. Let me end with this. Jesus says in verses 20 through 23, hey if this isn't demonically motivated. If I'm casting out demons by the power and finger of God, the spirit of God, well, then you gotta know man, the kingdom is right here. I mean, you got an opportunity to join the people of God and be a part of the kingdom, the kingdom of God is upon you. And you gotta know that if it's not done by Satan, how is it that I can walk into a village and help someone who is oppressed by a demon and with a word see them healed? I must be stronger than Beelzebul. So think that through. And as a matter of fact, if you're not willing to get on the bandwagon right now with me, if you're not with, well then you need to know you've made a decision. That's how a lot of people are. Gamaliel's kicking the can down the road, acting like he's not making a decision. And what Christ is saying, if he were there at the council that day, you are making a decision. You understand that. Your cynical friends who don't want to make a decision, the jury's gonna be out indefinitely. They love to dither about the claims of the Christ. Well you're making a decision. You're really not dithering. You're really not kicking the can. No one kicks the can down the road when it comes to the claims of Christ. And if you're not willing to join the team and help us make fishers of men here of all of us and grow the kingdom, well then you're scattering and you're keeping people out. (52:26)

That's a strong statement. You know what that is? That's a sense of urgency. You're gonna respond to the cynic? Do it, Letter C, with

2-C. Urgency.

Make sure they understand that you can't be neutral about the claims of Christ. Remember old C.S. Lewis' lunatic, liar, and Lord? Right? I created my own C's here, based on this. Either he's a crazy, he's a con-man, or he's the Christ. See ya Lewis? I can do this, I can play this game. Liar, lunatic or Lord. Now think about it. He's either crazy, and this whole thing that needs to be dismissed as nonsense. Or, he's a con-man. Jesus himself and all his followers are just about



manipulating people for their own benefit. Or, he's the Christ. You don't have many options when it comes to the extreme claims of Christ. He's not making moderate claims. He's not making small claims. Jesus is making huge claims. He's got the answer to death. He's got the problem of sin solved. He is the master, and the king of kings and lord of lords. I have no choice but to submit my life to him, or write him off as a con-man or a crazy. That's really what it comes down to, and the urgency of that needs to be felt when we deal with the cynic. (53:34)

Now wait, Pastor Mike. You said some people need to go home like the Bereans and research it. Listen. If you send someone home to research, I just want to make sure you don't leave them with space to dither about this. You need to make sure you are giving them even in their commission to study this, if they're not willing to listen to you anymore or they're like the people at the Aereopagus in Acts 17 and they're saying we want to hear more on this, you better try and make that appointment soon. And you better say even as you go and contemplate this there is urgency to this. (54:05)

I told you I was listening to that pastor preach on Hebrews 4. And he didn't go there but I couldn't help but go back to Hebrews 3, which I'm sure he preached on before that. But in Hebrews 3 he keeps repeating the cry of that terrible scene in Kadesh Barnea where God is saying as he looks at it, hey, today, if you'd hear his voice don't harden your heart—Psalm 95—as they did there in Numbers 14. Don't do that. Make sure that you hear his voice. You do not harden your hearts as they did in that rebellion. Today, today, today. He keeps using the word "today" in Hebrews 3. And what's the thing? Urgency. The gospel always has urgency attached to it. The gospel has always got this sense that if you're not with me right now, well then really you're against me. A vote of indifference is a vote against. (54:51)

Urgency. No one felt that more than D.L. Moody, particularly after that sermon on October 8, 1871. October 8, 1871 was a Sunday. Sunday night in downtown Chicago he was preaching. It was the largest gathering of people he had ever gathered together in his ministry at that particular point in Chicago, and he was preaching to them that Sunday night. And he was preaching there in the gospel of Matthew, that scene where Pilate has called Christ before him. And you know Pilate, kind of equivocating on what to do with Christ, and he was torn in his mind, and you know his wife had that dream, and he didn't know what to do. And he named the sermon, that D.L. Moody preached that night in Chicago, after that line as it says, what am I going to do with Christ? He entitled the sermon, "What then shall we do with Christ?" And he had preached, and he had preached, and he had preached. He got to the end of the sermon, and he ended this way. Let me read it for you. (55:42)

"Take this text home with you. Turn it over in your mind during the week. Next Sunday we'll come back together, and decide then what we should do with Jesus of Nazareth." That's how he ended the sermon. Then he called his worship director up, Ira Sankey, and Ira got up there on the platform there in downtown Chicago and started to sing the final song. Had everybody singing a song, we don't sing it much anymore, but listen to the irony of this. (56:10)

As D.L. Moody said, well go and think about it, mull it over, they sang a song with these lyrics:

Today, today the Savior calls,



Today for refuge to him fly,
The storms of justice fall,
And death is nigh.

They don't write 'em like that anymore, right? That's not gonna lift your spirit. They were singing that song, and as they were singing, they couldn't finish. More noise, more chaos outside. Through the thin wooden walls and planks of this big auditorium in downtown Chicago, people just kept hearing sirens, and people yelling, and chaos. And finally they dismissed in the middle of the song. They couldn't even finish the final song. It was the night, if you know your history, October the 8th, 1871, the headlines read later, "The day America burned", which if you visit Chicago you can't get through a tour of Chicago without them talking about the great Chicago fire. Many people died. Hundreds of thousands of people were left homeless. (57:05)

That crew that Moody was envisioning going home and coming back the next week, he never got a chance to talk to that crowd again. Not that same crowd. D.L. Moody regretted that till his dying day. He said later in his life, "I have never seen that congregation since. I will never meet those people until I meet them in another world. But I want to tell you one lesson that I learned that night which will never be forgotten, and that is this. When I preach, I will press Christ upon people then and there. I will try to bring them to a point of decision there on the spot. I would rather have my right hand cut off than to give an audience a week to decide what they'll do with Jesus." (57:49)

That's helpful. If Gamaliel wants to kick the can down the road, I don't know what's going to happen to Gamaliel. I have no idea what's going to happen in Israel. I have no idea what's going to happen in the Roman Empire. I have no idea what's going to happen if my heart may be so hardened I can't even respond to Christ next week. So even when we deal with the cynic, not only in other people but when we deal with the cynic in ourselves. You're doubting the goodness of God, don't kick the can down the road. Say I gotta deal with that now. I better sit down and figure out what it is, and what's the reason, and God help be figure out why I'm not believing what you've said. Respond to yourself in a rational, prayerful, logical, urgent way, and certainly with the people we deal with. (58:32)

Now that's a trick. I understand that's hard, a balance, and in the discussion questions I'm trying to make you think through that. How do I keep gentleness and respect that that apologetics verse in 1 Peter 3 talks about, and the urgency at the same time. Not talking about being rude. Not talking about being pushy. But I am talking about making clear to people that when you want to put Christ off, and the claims of Christ, well, that really is a no vote, at least for now. And we need to be careful with that. Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts as they did in the wilderness in the day of testing. (59:05)

Let's pray.

God, help us to think about cynicism and the gospel. To think about cynicism in our Bible reading. To think about looking at you and assuming you're not as good as you actually are. When non-Christians want to throw the whole of Christianity under the bus and say, "Aw, it's just a, you know, it's a con." Or when they want to say like Gamaliel, "Well, who knows. I mean,



who knows which religion is right." God, help us to pray, knowing that you know the thoughts of everyone that wants to say that and do that, everyone that wants to respond negatively toward Christ. You know what's going on in their hearts. God, help us to cling to you in prayer and in trust, utilizing your word that discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And let us also be much more logical, let us be rational. Let us study why it makes perfect sense to be a biblical Christian, a follower of Christ. Let us learn, let us study, let us think in logical terms. And then God, help us to be urgent, to know we really shouldn't linger with doubt and skepticism and cynicism in our lives. Do that, God, so that we can be trusting you fully. And help us, God, to be much more effective in our evangelism. Do this God, please, through us, as we think about this barrier to you, this cynical barrier, and help us obliterate that in our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.