

## Removing Hurdles to Becoming a Christian Luke 5:27-32

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**Intro:** We are in a series that I have called "The defense of the faith series." Today's sermon is unique in that we will not be dealing with intellectual challenges to our faith such as those raised in the DaVinci Code. We will deal with more practical hurdles that keep people from coming to Christ.

**Rabbit:** When it comes to answering objections raised by non Christians, we need to be discerning.

*There are two types of objections and questions that non Christians raise: sincere questions and smokescreen questions.*

Jesus faced both. In the week before he went to the cross, his enemies tried to come up with several trick questions: "Should we pay taxes? If a woman had seven husbands, who will she be married to in heaven? (This was raised by a group, the Sadducees who did not believe in life after death.) Jesus exposed false motives in these questions or refused to answer some of them altogether.

Yet he took extended time to deal with sincere questions of sincere seekers.

If I sense that someone is not seeking the truth but trying to have roast Christian for supper, I don't feel like I have to devote much time and energy in that direction. But I love trying to give good answers to those with real questions.

*Five Hurdles that Keep people from becoming a Christian.*

### **I. I feel too sinful to believe God would want me.**

1. Many people have allowed a legitimate feeling of guilt to make them feel that they have no future. God makes us feel bad inside through our conscience when we sin so that we will repent and be forgiven. But this sorrow over our past can become crushing.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7:10 "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."**

2. Often times a person has added to the guilt they feel the rejection by others because of their past.
  - That was the case with the group we read about here in Luke 5. Jesus went and had dinner with the outcasts and was criticized for it. His answer was that he was a spiritual doctor who had come to heal those who were spiritually sick. They were outcasts who stuck together and were overjoyed that a Rabbi like Jesus would tell them God would want them!

- Tokyo has a thriving Christian church with an interesting pastor, Hiroyuko Suzuki. He was once a member of the Yakuza, with the tattoos covering his body and several fingers missing. A sign of loyalty in the Yakuza is to cut off a finger and give it to someone. He had done horrible things as a member of this gang and the guilt drove him to consider suicide. But before he took his life, he decided to visit the church of his estranged Christian wife and talk to her pastor. He confessed his crimes and even how he had mistreated and deserted his wife and children. He felt he was beyond forgiveness. But the pastor told him of the cross of Jesus and had the privilege of winning him to Christ.
3. The key to overcoming guilt and receiving forgiveness is to focus not on how bad your past has been but on how strong God's grace is.

**Luke 5:20-25** Jesus declared he had authority to forgive sins.

- A Scottish doctor was known not only for his great ability but for his character as a Christian. Through the years he had written off many of his patients bills. IN red ink beside their accounts he wrote words like these: 'Forgiven- too poor to pay.'" When he died, his wife felt that he had been too lenient and tried to sue to collect these old debts. The judge looked at the ledger and asked the wife: 'Is this your husband's handwriting?" Yes. "There is not a court in the land that can obtain money after he has written forgiven over the debt."

## II. I don't feel all that sinful, so why do I need a Savior?

Luke 5:31-32 was said to Pharisees with a note of irony. They needed the Physician and just didn't realize they were sick, too.

This same crowd would lie about Jesus and hound him till they committed his murder!

- Phil Donahue had Billy Graham on his show years ago. He asked BG what his favorite hymn was. BG answered "Amazing Grace". "Say the first line... a wretch like me... I don't feel like I'm a wretch. I'm not a bad person."

Sometimes it's easier to lead a prostitute to Christ than a pillar of the community.

We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. **Romans 3:23**. We just feel better because we compare ourselves with others who are worse than us rather than with God's standard of holiness.

One sin a day for a year, ten years = thousands of sins!

Most live long enough to knock their spiritual superiority props out from under them.

- Robert Capon was an Episcopalian priest who frankly didn't understand why Christians were so excited about grace. He was a good man who entered the church to do good works. In mid-life, he had an affair and confessed it to his wife and asked for forgiveness. She refused! Nothing he

did brought her back and he saw his failure and helplessness. Now he understood what the big deal about grace was all about.

### **III. I don't want to be a hypocrite. I don't know if I can really live the Christian life.**

I appreciate the sincerity and humility in this objection. We don't want anyone to take this commitment lightly.

There are truths about the Christian life that someone who raises this objection does not understand.

1. You don't grit your teeth and change your life. Jesus comes in and changes you from the inside out. **2 Cor. 5:17**
2. God has promised to both save and keep you when you become a Christian. It is not about whether you can hold out as a Christian but how strong God is going to be holding on to you.

**Jude 24-25:** <sup>24</sup>**To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—** <sup>25</sup>**to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.**

**Phil. 1:6-**<sup>6</sup>**being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus**

- Sailor in shipwreck off coast of Scotland. He managed in the night to swim to a rock and hold on till daylight. His friends asked him if he were scared that night. "Didn't ye trimble?" "Trimble, Sure I trimbled. But ne'er once did the rock trimble neath me."
1. We also need to teach people a realistic picture of the Christian life. Christians don't become sinless. We just sin less. Gal. 5 describes a tug of war between two natures that goes on till we see Jesus in heaven.

### **IV. There are too many hypocrites in the church for me to take the Gospel seriously.**

1. Of all the objections to the Gospel, this one breaks my heart most because I know so many have been hurt by people who were Christians or Christian leaders. Many young people have been turned off by adults in church splits. How many have been pushed away by the hypocrisy of Christian parents who acted one way in church and another in the home? How many have been hurt by preachers: either their moral falls or through abuse by priests and pastors?
2. Jesus was strong in denouncing religious hypocrites in his day. He was mad when he attacked the leaders in **Matt. 23- Hypocrites! The only time Jesus got angry was at religious hypocrisy. He treated broken sinners with tenderness.**

3. *But is the church "full of hypocrites?" No!* Most people really do love Jesus and want to be better Christians than they are. There are a lot of sincere Christians in this church whose life would draw you to Christ not drive you away.
4. There is a difference from saying all Christians are sinners and all are hypocrites. We make no claim to being better than others. We see the church as a hospital for hurting people, not a showcase for the better than thou people. Hypocrisy is not a real charge because we are open about our failures and struggles.
5. Some of the most powerful witnesses have come when Christian apologize to others for their failure. Lost people generally cover up and become self defensive.
6. Please remember that our faith is not in Christians but in Jesus. He is no hypocrite and he never fails.

**V. I'm waiting for a feeling before I become a Christian.**

1. I'm not sure where this objection came from. Somewhere someone was given a wrong impression. You don't get saved because you feel like it. You get saved because you are commanded to. Salvation is a command!

**2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:** <sup>8</sup>He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup>They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power <sup>10</sup>on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

**Acts 17:** <sup>30</sup>In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup>For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

2. Waiting on a feeling is dangerous. You are not promised tomorrow. The bible says *today is the day of salvation*.
  - Moody learned a lesson about the urgency of calling people to salvation. He was preaching a sermon on "What do you think about Christ?" to a full church on Sunday night in Chicago. He told everyone to go home and think about committing their life to Christ and come back next week to make their decision. That night the Chicago Fire rushed through the town and many in the crowd died before they could escape it.

**Conclusion: No hurdle will seem worth it if you go through this life without accepting Jesus and stand before him in eternity!**