

# Ambassador III - Character

## An Ambassador Does Not Bring Reproach (part 1)

### Introduction/Review

The last two weeks we discussed how an Ambassador knows the fear of the LORD (Cor. 5). The first week we talked about the fear of the LORD as:

- Foundational (beginning of wisdom/knowledge)
- Experienced by all who encounter Him (friends and enemies alike!)
- Paradoxical for Christians--
  - base fear due to His Holiness (and our lack of it)
  - fear of what would have been--prompting proportionate love and gratitude
  - a resulting love-motivated fear of not pleasing Him (“it is our aim”- v.9)

Last week we discussed how an ambassador, knowing the fear of the Lord, dares not tamper with the message of reconciliation that has been entrusted to him/her. Then we discussed some of the reasons why an ambassador might tamper with God’s message:

- pride -- “we can do better”
- ignorance -- “just don’t know any better” (apathy?)
- fear of man -- “what will people think?” (future lesson on this)

### →→→→→→ Living it Out

#### *Knowing the Fear of the LORD, an ambassador:*

- would not dare to tamper with His message – the Gospel
- **would not dare to misrepresent His Character or otherwise bring reproach upon Christ or His Bride by living immorally or foolishly. (ref. Piper Handout)**
- is growing in boldness and courage, putting to death the fear of man.

... would not dare to misrepresent God's character or bring reproach upon Christ or is Bride by living immorally or foolishly.

*White board exercise:* What are some of the ways that people wearing the label “Christian” bring reproach upon God, Christ, the Church and the Gospel? Think back to Week 1 and how the world might characterize Christians... [seed questions]

- I. About God [Does it glorify God to teach false things about Him?--What are some?]
- II. Immorality [How might our lifestyles bring reproach?]
- III. Foolishness [Is immorality the only way we bring reproach?]

Let's categorize these on the basis of how they represent God, because it's about Him, not us.

*Imagine for a moment how you'd feel if someone was introducing you to someone else (or to a crowd) and began to give wrong information... your spouse's name wrong, the wrong school or profession, ... perhaps even telling stories of your conversations or exploits together that you know never happened ...*

➤ Now amplify the offense by applying this to the Living God!

**An ambassador, knowing the fear of the Lord, dares not bring reproach on God by:**

**I. Explicitly teaching wrong things about God.**

What are some things commonly taught or assumed about God in the culture at large or in the pop-church culture? (ref. the white board)

A. **His most defining characteristic is love**, with love being defined in a worldly rather than Scriptural way.

*Scaling the Language Barrier*

Worldly love = gushy affection + blanket affirmation

Godly love = sacrificially putting another ahead of yourself

In reality, God's most defining characteristic is Holiness. *"Holy, holy, holy..."*

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<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 6:3** And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

<sup>ESV</sup> **Revelation 4:8** And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

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The biblical word for holy has two distinct meanings. The primary meaning is "apartness" or "otherness." When we say that God is holy, we call attention to the profound difference between Him and all creatures. It refers to God's transcendent majesty, His august superiority, by virtue of which He is worth of our honor reverence, adoration, and worship. He is "other" or different from us in His glory...

The secondary meaning of holy refers to God's pure and righteous actions..."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 55:9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

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<sup>1</sup> Sproul, R.C., *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, Tyndale House, 1992, p. 47.

- “God would never send anyone to hell”
- “God would never condemn me for living the way He made me”
- “God would never violate our free will” [transition to next]

**B. He’s less than sovereign.** *Think about how foreign this kind of language is to Scripture.*

We cannot repeat here all of the “Knows his Sovereign” material from Amb-I here. The take away from this is that we not only need to know about our Sovereign, we need to live in light of what we know.

1. God would never violate human free will.

This is a given not only in the worldly culture, but also in much of church culture. Is it true?

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<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 9:12** But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, ....

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 10:1** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them,

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 2:30** But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate,...

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 16:14** One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

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- “It’s free will, God can’t ...”

This may seem like an easy way to “let God off the hook” for evil and suffering in the world today. But is it true?

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<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 50:20** As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 4:26-28** The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed <sup>27</sup> for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

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You can learn more about *compatibilism*<sup>2</sup> in an excerpt from James White’s book on my web site.

2. God “tries.” *Think of the absurd implications of each.*

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<sup>2</sup> “Compatibilism” <http://objectivegospel.org/reformed/compatibilism.shtml>

- “God is trying to tell me something” [“Seriously? ... How much trouble did God have communicating with people in Scripture accounts?”]
  - “God is trying to build His Church ...” [“God is weak/struggling”]
  - “God is trying to save everyone ...” [“God fails”]
3. We are in charge in the relationship.
- “... make Jesus lord...”
  - “... allow God to ...”
4. God doesn’t know the future. (Open theism)

As an ambassador, this language should drive you batty. As a loving and gentle ambassador, this is not a call to nitpick and humiliate people. Practice your Columbo questions<sup>3</sup>. “**What do you mean by** *allow* God?” or “...God is *trying*?”

## II. Implicitly teaching wrong things about God by the way we live.

How we live our lives before a watching world (and Church) speaks volumes about the God and King we claim to serve.

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<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 10:31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Peter 4:11** whoever speaks, [*let him speak*] as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies--in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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### A. *Living Immorally*

You may expect me to spend a lot of time on this, but I actually have little to say about it. It’s important, but neither complicated nor subtle. When a professing Christian sins, it brings reproach upon God.

- There is no such thing as private sin.

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<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 6:20** for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 12:2-5** Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops. <sup>4</sup>“I tell you, my friends, do not fear

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<sup>3</sup> Columbo questions are taught in Amb-III. The three forms are: 1) “What do you mean by that?” (learn what they think); 2) “How did you come to that conclusion?” (learn how they think); and 3) “Have you considered [*biblical/sound alternative*]?” (gently steer them to the truth).

those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. <sup>5</sup> But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

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- No matter how socially acceptable your sin, God is reproached when you continue in it. Living/sleeping together outside of marriage is sin; don't kid yourself.
  - Best guidance... *flee!* --Note the positive tone. Though God condemns the cowardly (Rev 21:8), fleeing sin is noble and wise.
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<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 6:18** Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 2:22** So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

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*You might think of this as the time when it is appropriate to pray for speed rather than strength.*

## **B. Living Foolishly**

As I mentioned earlier, the way we live speaks volumes about the God we claim to love and serve. Central here is the way in which we go about making decisions in our lives. This is a big topic (three week fire hose seminar) that I will, Lord willing, condense into a single lesson for next week.

### **Schedule for Upcoming Sundays:**

Apr 17 - Wk 4 -- No Reproach by Living Foolishly

Apr 24 - Off -- Resurrection Celebration

May 1 - Wk 5 -- Fear of Man -- \*Clarus--Consider both services and catch up by notes

May 8 - Wk 6 -- Fruits of the Spirit I

May 15 - Wk 7 -- Fruits of the Spirit II

May 22 - Wk 8 -- Fruits of the Spirit III

May 29 - Off -- Memorial Day weekend

June 5 - Wk 9 -- Fruits of the Spirit IV

### Breakout

I. The Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) is broadcast all over the world featuring health and wealth prosperity teachers, bad makeup, silly signs and wonders, and endless send-us-your-seed (money) praise-a-thons etc.

- *Are they bringing glory or reproach on God? (in what way?)*
- *As an ambassador for Christ, how do handle being associated with TBN?*

[Another gospel ... 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal 1:6 ... itching ears 2 Tim 4:3 ...]

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II. Biblically Reformed folks like us from DSC are often accused of character assassination with respect to God. [*So we're kind of turning the tables here...*] We had a couple leave our CG and DSC over this issue after a thorough study of Romans 9. I could see in their eyes concern for our very souls that we could believe *what they characterize as:*

- *"you believe that God brings people kicking and screaming against their will into the Kingdom..." (one author called it "cosmic rape")*
  - *"you believe that God predestines people to hell... What kind of love is that?"*
- *As an ambassador for Christ, how do you respond to these accusations?*
- *Are we bringing reproach on God by smearing His character? If not, why not?*  
*How do we know what we know about God? --Scripture*  
*What does Scripture teach about predestination?*  
*What does Scripture teach about God's sovereignty over human will? (does he "violate" it or graciously change it?... )*  
*How careful ought we to be about judging God? (Holding God to fallen human standards?)*  
*Isa 55:9; Job 38; Rom 9:14ff*

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### *Suggested Reading:*

*Marks of the Messenger--Ch 4,5.*

*The Heart of Evangelism-Section IV Ch. 27-38 (two weeks)*

*Decision Making and the Will of God--Class Notes available at:*

<http://objectivegospel.org/training/DecisionMaking/>

*Compatibilism (Dr. James White) <http://objectivegospel.org/reformed/compatibilism.shtml>*