

Inoculated

Neil Gizzard

As incredible as it may sound, there may be no people group harder to reach with the gospel than the Americans in the U.S. To be sure, the U.S. radio and television is inundated with gospel programming, Bibles and books about the Bible are published incessantly and “Christian” education (from pre-school through master’s degree programs) and apologetics “ministry” is big business. The internet is heavily populated with various sites and resources that put forth gospel information (much of it accurate and even valuable) that is available any time day or night. On what basis, then, can we conclude that the Americans are remaining unreached by the gospel?

Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn. 13:35) The real evidence that the gospel of Christ has truly penetrated the hearts of a people group is not found in what they talk about. In fact, Paul wrote, “The kingdom of God is not in word but in power” (1 Cor. 4:20) and James warned, “Be *doers* of the work, *and not hearers only*, deceiving yourselves.” (Jas. 1:22) Any “gospel” that is built on knowledge and talk and not on actively caring for one another, the poor, the disadvantaged and the weak is a false gospel. (Jas. 1:27, etc.)

In spite of the many charitable organizations that exist and flourish in the U.S., the usual American is not trained to personally function in God’s love (Greek, *agape* [26]) but is instead conditioned to function in lawlessness (Greek, *anomia* [458]), doing what is right in one’s own eyes (see Jdgs. 21:25), a mindset that Jesus warned would cause the love of many to grow cold. (Mt. 24:12) Thus even many a charitable deed is not an act of God’s *agape* love but is instead a legalistic “Christian” act because that’s what “Christians” do. The motivation is too often to be a “good person” by one’s own actions and not to obey God and be led by His Spirit. (Rom. 8:14) Jesus said that those who practiced only lawlessness would have to depart from Him. (Mt. 7:23) Over half of the *millions* of Americans who claim to follow Christ attend a mega-“church” where simple attendance at what is primarily a lecture hall (where one receives confirmations of whatever “truths” one wants to hear as well as affirmations of one’s innate goodness) is called “being a Christian.” And this is only the tip of the iceberg of deceptions found at a mega-“church”!

The usual American faces other kinds of hurdles as well. Jesus said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” (Mk. 10:23) Many Americans are caught in the web of wealth that surrounds them. High rent or high mortgage payments combine with elevated costs of living and these pressure husbands and fathers as well as wives and mothers to virtually abandon their children so as to take up enough work and income (which is often a mere pittance especially in comparison to the income of the corporate CEOs and management) just to “make ends meet.” Any possession of some luxury or technological gadget (that slick advertisers insist we all must have) only exacerbates the financial dilemma. It is indeed difficult to turn a deaf ear to all these advertisements that function eerily like Aldous Huxley’s hypnopaedia (sleep teaching) in his 1932 *Brave New World* in which “sixty-two thousand four hundred repetitions make one truth.” The countless thousands of commercials the average television viewer experiences may or may not sell any particular product, especially among jaded viewers who long ago became accustomed to ignoring the commercials, but they do very efficiently and effectively teach, sell and reinforce the idea that being a good consumer is the right way to live. The power of commercials to sell products and even elect presidents is too

well demonstrated and documented to pretend they don't work exceedingly well at influencing the actions, particularly spending, of many.

As inundated with information and saturated with mobility as many Americans are, isolation is also a surprising factor in the nearly impenetrable shield built around many Americans to separate them from the full effects of the gospel. Since one spends much time at work, where gospel discussions are largely forbidden by law, one is likely only to encounter the gospel if one chooses to look for it. Indeed, one can stumble across gospel information by flipping a radio dial, channel surfing or even random internet site hopping. But encountering someone who *in the name of Christ* is willing to lay down their life (Jn. 15:13) and who is truly and actively loving them with God's love is a rare, perhaps even a once in a lifetime occurrence. Rather than experiencing divine love, many Americans live in a world where hope and compassion are simply dead to them – and their interactions with a “church” are often worse than their interactions with the world!

- Philosophically, Americans are led to do whatever works for them as individuals and are told that this is the liberty to which they are entitled. The idea that there is one truth available for all of mankind is ridiculed and divine, ultimate truth cannot be found – indeed it is no longer welcomed! – at many a “church”!

- Financially, Americans are pressured to pursue a lifestyle of wealth that leads most often only to slavery to debt or cultural expectations. It is the rare, often misunderstood and sometimes persecuted individual who finds a way to sidestep the entrenched systems. This option is not readily available to the poor.

- Relationally, Americans will “rub shoulders” with one another but many have no true friends with whom they can be deeply real nor count upon in their day of trouble. This superficiality is found in many “churches” which consider the act of saying “hello” to one another to be “fellowship” in Christ. Those who have fled the “church” for this or any other similar reason still encounters this superficiality outside of the “church” walls and is often hurt or confused as a result.

- Spiritually, many Americans hunger for “something more” but too often seek a “fast food” kind of solution to their hunger for things beyond themselves. Lethal poisons and slow-acting ideas are consumed and these seem to curb one's immediate hunger but the end result is a dependence upon one's spiritual feeder (“pastor,” “teacher,” “apostle,” whatever – see 2 Tim. 4:3-4) or else leads to a rejection of everything but what self wants to do, no matter how self-destructive that may be.

- Religiously, most “church”-ites are locked into their own “doctrines” and “theology” and anyone who differs from those is considered to be a divisive man who to be avoided and excluded. (Tit. 3:10-11 is a favorite for “church” damage control teams) Even where many ideas are held in common by some believers, as soon as one finds any difference whatsoever in beliefs, it is sufficient grounds for moving on to find others who are of like mind. Paul called this kind

of divisiveness (Greek, *dichostasia* [1370]) carnal and warned that it would keep one out of the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21) He also warned that true followers of Christ should note those who cause such divisions and avoid them. (Rom. 16:17)

One could see all these hurdles and easily conclude that the Americans are unreachable and thus run off to be a missionary to foreign lands. But unless God has indeed called one to go to that country, this will amount to jumping from the pan into the fire as one will discover that the above tendencies are not merely American tendencies but are the tendencies of humankind wherever affluence (the god mammon – Mt. 6:24) reigns over the affairs of average people – a condition becoming more prevalent around the world. These tendencies are simply more recognizable in many Americans because mammon has ruled much of America for nearly 70 years, a period of rule that may come to as abrupt an end as did the Communist rule over the Soviet Union.

As we consider these over-arching, broad-stroke generalities, let us also clearly and equally recognize that there are exceptions to the above stated generalizations – often within the systems and institutions that so clearly embody the generalization! And let us equally and as emphatically state that God's purpose among the nations remains unchanged. Any who will repent and believe in Christ may enter God's kingdom through spiritual new birth (Jn. 3:3, 5) and find that God has intended for both Jews and Gentiles (that is, all non-Jews – in other words, all peoples) to "be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ through the gospel." (Eph. 3:6)

The true gospel is good news of peace with God and of unity with the oneness that is God. Christ is the Head of all things to His people (Eph. 1:22) and the "church" is only a prostitute who imitates (badly and with devastating results in the lives of those who are ensnared by her) the place, role and function of the bride of Christ, that is, His body, His people, His ekklesia (Greek, [1577], poorly translated "church" in English – see Rev. 17:5, Prov. 7:10-12) Only as we obediently abandon the "church" (2 Cor. 6:17-18, 1 Cor. 5:11) are we in any position to fully become His ekklesia – that is, His people called out of the darkness of this world to attend to the issues and affairs of Christ's kingdom of light. (Col. 1:13) Let us not confuse the time in which sincere followers have ignorantly remained in and faithful to their "church" (while they also were learning to participate in God's divine love and service to others) as God's endorsement of any particular "church." God is able to save anyone in any environment – and He is able to lead such people through and out of such things in accordance with His own plans and timetable. It is our task to cooperate with His plans and timetable and not force our own understandings or agendas on the lives of others. Only in this way will they be able to hear the proclamation of liberty the Spirit has for those held in various "church" bondages. Only in this way will we ourselves be free of the ensnaring deceptions found in the prison of death and darkness which only Christ's *ekklesia* (and not the prostitute "church") may overcome. (Mt. 16:18)

The Americans, and those others around the world traveling in similar directions (consider how much of Europe is now labeled "post-Christian"), are unreached by the gospel, not because they have never been exposed to it but rather because they have been inoculated against it, most often at some "church." Because the "church" exposes its people to mild doses of truth (often intermingled with error and deception while most often being made palatable and tolerable with humor and human interest – so called "sermons") but doesn't train the people to hear Christ

for themselves (Jn. 10:27, Heb. 8:10, 1 Jn. 2:27, etc.), the result is carnality and spiritual infancy at best (see 1 Cor. 3:1, Heb. 5:12-13) or apostasy at worst. (1 Tim. 4:1, etc. Because the “church” provides a place where a mixed multitude (believers, non-believers, pseudo-believers and mis-believers) can come in and anonymously hear the gospel information free of all need or responsibility to actually obey the gospel (except before God, that is) and are still allowed, enabled and even encouraged to call themselves “Christians” and to think of themselves as belonging to Christ’s “church,” the result is confusion at best (see 1 Cor. 14:33) and abomination at worst. (Lk. 16:15) Because the “church” places a man (the “pastor”) as the head of a congregation of like-minded commuters, the result is not a local ekklesia but rather, and at best, a heresy (Greek, *hairesis* [139], sect, party, division, denomination, a division that is carnal and at enmity with God – see Rom. 8:7) and, at worst, a cult in which the man is unduly exalted and blindly followed at the expense of what Christ said and intends.

The Americans and those like them are unreachable because they are immune and indifferent to the truth, isolated (by choice and by wealth) from real and true life, and handicapped (even stunted) in their ability to relate with anyone (let alone *God!*) who loves them in spite of their deep flaws – flaws which many “instinctively” or spiritually know these flaws exist but most refuse to even acknowledge the flaws, let alone seek for any drastic remedies like the cross of Christ. Yet God continues to love them enough to send Christ to die in their rightful place. Nor is there is any methodology or formula by which such as these might be reached. The Lord knows those who are His (2 Tim. 2:19) and those who are unjust, filthy, righteous or holy are enjoined to continue on just as they are – and to expect appropriate compensation for their works. (Rev. 22:11-12) Anyone who believes their lifestyle entitles them to judgment from God and who does not wish to experience such things, has opportunity now to repent and turn from the wicked works that have alienated them from God and made them God’s enemy. (Col. 1:21) The wise person in such a condition should take advantage of God’s offer of grace and mercy while it is still available. (Heb. 3:14-15)

John wrote, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. For by this we shall know that we are of the truth, and we shall [be able to] assure (persuade, set at rest) our hearts before Him.” (1 Jn. 3:18-19) Jesus’ command is still before us: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. As I have loved you, you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn. 13:34-35) As important as truth is – and no one who genuinely has Christ will depart from truth – it is love, genuine divine agape love, that stands as the real “ID card” of the kingdom of God. All else is mere fraud and counterfeit designed to make one comfortable on one’s way to an eternal hell. Do not be deceived.

Let he who has ears hear.

Neil Girrard
Paidion Books
P.O. Box 327
Capitan, NM 88316

Website – www.paidionbooks.org
Email – paidion@paidionbooks.org
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