

CALL SINNERS TO RESPOND TO THE GOSPEL!

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Someone once said that Christians should learn to plead with sinners to embrace Christ and escape hell. A child of God could faithfully give the gospel, speak of God and His character, man and His desperate need, Christ and His sufficient atonement, repentance and faith in clear terms, but one element that evangelists seem to omit is the *urgent call for sinners to respond to the gospel!* Paul said that he was not ashamed to beg! He pleaded with sinners to come to Christ. Whitefield loudly and lovingly wept as he urged sinners to turn to Christ and live! Spurgeon spoke of this kind of urgent pleading with frequency. The Puritan preachers spent a good deal of time in their sermons exhorting sinners to embrace Christ and follow Him. We should learn from these examples and do the same. We must call sinners to respond to the gospel.

How should Christians ‘call for a response’ when speaking the gospel?

1. Call for a response in OBEDIENCE TO SCRIPTURE.

Elijah called the pagans to ‘choose whom they would serve’: if Baal was god, follow him; if Yahweh was god, follow Him. Joshua told the children of Israel to ‘choose whom they would serve’ and he modeled it by saying that he and his household would serve the LORD. Jesus pleaded with His disciples to ‘compel sinners’ to come to the wedding feast. Paul pleaded with Herod to repent and come to Christ. As ambassadors of God Almighty, believers must take Paul’s words and beg for men and women to be reconciled to God. We must call for a response! We must plead with folks to embrace Christ! We must follow the example set before us by the Apostles: “Repent and believe the gospel!”

2. Call for a response in FOLLOWING CHRIST’S EXAMPLE.

The life and ministry of Christ unveils His heart as He pleaded with sinners repeatedly and patiently to come to Himself for salvation. Often, in the Temple against the backdrop of the hypocritical, works-righteousness system of Judaism, Christ would teach how He came down from heaven as the living Bread, as the water of life, as the door to heaven, as the Shepherd for the sheep, as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and he invited all to come to Him. If *anyone* is thirsty, let him come to me. He exemplified not only the clear and bold *proclamation* of gospel-truth, but he also modeled urgent and compassionate *exhortations* to respond to the gospel. We must do the same.

3. Call for a response in WARNING AGAINST UNBELIEF.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel that saves. The gospel of Jesus Christ delivers from hell. No other message on the planet can save from eternal perdition. No other Name given to sinners can deliver from damnation. No other substitutionary work can atone for sins and remove God’s just fury. The good news of Jesus Christ and His cross-work and His imputed righteousness is what saves. It is for this reason that every evangelist should incorporate into his gospel conversations a warning against unbelief. Repeatedly, Jesus said that whoever does not have the Son does not have the Father. Whoever rejected the Apostles in their itinerant preaching rejected the Son and whoever rejected the Son rejected the Father. No one can have the Father without the Son. None can say yes to the Son and say no to the Father. There is no way to come to the Father *but through* the one door: Jesus Christ. He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No other path exists whereby one may come to God the Father. Tellers of the gospel must warn sinners of this! To not believe is to

commit the sin of unbelief. To live in unbelief is to persist in willful sin. To refuse to bow the knee to Christ *now* is to live in unbelief and sin *now*. Christians should faithfully proclaim the gospel, diligently call sinners to respond to the gospel, and boldly warn sinners against rejecting the gospel and dying in the state of willful rejection of the truth (even after having heard the faithful gospel presented to them). Warn the sinner, O Christian!

4. Call for a response in COUNTING THE COST.

Jesus did not preach a gospel akin to many of the popular evangelists in the 21st century today. He never told His followers that they would enjoy wealth, happiness, better health, and certain peace *in and of themselves*. Rather, he told them to die to themselves. He commanded them to lose their lives. He told them to hate everything on earth in comparison with the supreme love they must have for Him *alone*. He required exclusive allegiance. He demanded that they forsake any and all other options of attaining righteousness. He warned them that they would die for the faith. He informed them that suffering *would certainly* come upon them. He spoke that they would be rejected, despised, mocked, and endure much hardship for the gospel. Yet he still called for sinners to respond to the gospel. Perhaps this is why many of the ‘followers’ (=disciples) of Jesus heard his teachings and then ‘left him and followed Him no more.’ A faithful gospel proclamation that models the heralding of Christ should include a plea to count the cost. Unless one gives up all his possessions (that is, a willingness to renounce everything and anything for the cause of Christ), he cannot be Christ’s disciple. O Christian, include this in your gospel call!

5. Call for a response in RELIANCE ON THE SPIRIT.

Jesus Himself preached that the Spirit gives life. No one can come to Me, Jesus said, unless the Spirit of God draws Him. One must be born from above and be born of the Spirit. Jesus believed that new life eternal does not come at a sinner’s own whim. No one enters heaven because of his own freewill. No one chooses Christ because he desires the fire insurance so as to escape hell *merely*. O Christian, evangelize with such a reliance on the Spirit that you understand that no dead sinner can come to life unless the Spirit of God regenerates him first. Life must first enter the sinner before he can call out to Christ in saving faith and be justified. Rely on the Spirit in all your gospel conversations! Pray passionately! Pray persistently! Pray constantly! Pray believingly! Call sinners to respond to the gospel with all the persuasive mechanisms you have — and yet realize that you can’t do anything in the slightest to save someone, or even make them *desire it more*. It fully rests on the sovereignty of the Spirit. So call for a response as you confidently trust in the Sovereign grace of the Spirit of God to take your words and bring life.

6. Call for a response in COMPASSION FOR THE SINNER.

A sick patient sitting in the doctor’s office may hear the news of a life-threatening illness that has come into his body and as the doctor gives him the news and the grave consequences, the doctor who really loves his patient will offer *the one* medicine that can deliver the person from death. He not only describes the *only solution* available; he urges the patient to receive it — immediately. The physician does this because he cares for his patients. And how much more must the child of God proclaim the gospel to the lost and hellbound out of great love for their immortal souls! The Christian has the *only* solution to escape hell. The child of God knows the only path to escaping the tidal wave of God’s rage. The believer possesses the only shield and refuge to protect from the flaming and soul-piercing darts of God’s eternal fury. In telling the good news of salvation, the Christian should call for a response out of deep compassion for the sinner. O may the sinner escape hell. O call for the rebel to run for refuge to Jesus Christ! O plead with the transgressor to come to Christ, the wrath-bearing sacrifice who died for His people and offers them His righteousness through repentance and faith in Him. O may the evangelist’s compassion boil! O may the proclaimer run after sinners and plead with them, hold to them, persuade them, and urge them to flee from the wrath to come with a Christ-like and a Christ-pursuing passion!