

Why I Believe Open-Air Preaching Is Effective

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I love open-air preaching. Do I get scared? Are there times when I am tempted to fear man? Of course. But I must remind myself time and time again that it is not about *me* anyway; it's all about *Christ* and His sufficient gospel.

I want to provide a number of reasons why I personally am convinced that open-air preaching is effective.

I. Open-Air Preaching Obeys Christ's Command to Compel Sinners to Come to Him in the Highways.

In a parable, Jesus says to "go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23). I believe that in my standing up in the public plazas outside where nonbelievers pass by or congregate together, I am endeavoring to follow Christ and what He spoke to His disciples.

2. Open-Air Preaching Takes the Biblical Gospel to the Pagans Who Probably Don't Know the Biblical Gospel.

Many nonbelievers *think* they know what Christians believe. Sadly, many have grown up in churches or have been taught an unbiblical gospel. I desire to take the biblical gospel — as rarely as it is preached today — to the pagans who need to hear this biblical gospel so that they may be saved. The biblical gospel is that God is so holy that His wrath currently rests upon all unbelievers. His wrath will soon be kindled and all His enemies will eternally perish under His hand. The problem they have is that God's wrath needs to be appeased; it needs to be diverted. And this is precisely the gospel as God initiated and solved this problem as Jesus Christ humbled Himself and lived a sinless life perfectly obeying the Law of God and yet God the Father crushed His Son on Calvary's cross. He poured out His infinite wrath and eternal judgment upon Jesus Christ when He was on the cross. This is the doctrine of propitiation. God's wrath is appeased and turned away only *in Christ*. A person must repent of sin and believe in the gospel and thus evidence true Spirit-given regeneration by living a life following Christ, loving Him, and abiding in Him. This is the gospel message that pagans must hear!

3. Open-Air Preaching Allows Many Who May Never Step Foot in a Bible-Teaching Church to Hear the Gospel.

Let's face it, there are many who enjoy the darkness, masses who run their way into eternal hell because they love their sin & hate Jesus as a Savior. They have exchanged eternal life for temporary and passing pleasures. They live in sin and damn their souls forever. Many unbelievers will not walk into a Bible-teaching Church and so I believe that open-air preaching takes the biblical gospel *to them* rather than waiting for the pagans to *come to us*.

4. Open-Air Preaching Demonstrates the Urgency of the Gospel Message.

Many churchgoers believe that 'friendship evangelism' is a biblical methodology for sharing Christ with non-Christians. This, however, is unbiblical and there is no example in the Bible of making a relationship with someone *first* so that the door will then be open and the friendship established to share Christ at a later point. This presumes that we will have a 'tomorrow' to share Christ with someone. No one is guaranteed tomorrow. Far from friendship evangelism, we have evangelistic begging. We have urgent pleading. We have statements such as: "Today is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2) and "We beg you to be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20) and "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Heb 3:7, 15; 4:7). This is urgent! Hell is hot and wrath is waiting to receive all those who die in their sin and have not repented. There is a profound

earnestness that must characterize our evangelism and ministry. Open-air preaching is one way that the urgency of the gospel message is demonstrated as the preacher stands and urgently, passionately, and lovingly begs sinners to repent of their sin, believe in the gospel, and be spared from judgment. He is a watchman crying out to the people warning from coming danger!

5. Open-Air Preaching Follows an Example Set by Jesus and the Early Apostles (and Many Others in Church History).

Jesus Himself taught in the open (Mark 4; Matthew 5-7). John the Baptist preached in the wilderness (Matt 3:1-10). Paul preached on Mars Hill (Acts 17; cf. Acts 26). Jonah preached in the open city (Jonah 3:1-5). Jeremiah lifted his voice in the Temple courts (Jer 7:1-4). Whitefield, Wesley, Spurgeon, Edwards, and many others in church history have heralded the gospel of Christ in the open fields, in parks, in city squares, in plazas, and on street corners. To lift up one's voice and loudly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in the open to nonbelievers present (or passing by) continues the example set forth by many in the Bible and in church history.

6. Open-Air Preaching Trusts Completely in the Glorious Sovereignty of the Spirit of God to Awaken a Sinner and Grant Him Repentance and Faith.

Like any biblical form of evangelism, open-air preaching fully relies on the sovereignty of God to awaken a dead sinner and grant him new life in Christ. When an open air preacher proclaims Christ in the open, it is not a smooth presentation that will win souls, nor is it a fancy oratory, nor is it a manipulative method of evangelism of decisionism seeking to get 'converts.' There is a robust and unshakeable reliance on the sovereign regeneration that the Spirit of God imparts to the utterly deadened sinner with the subsequent repentance from sin and faith in Christ that the sinner will have. Open-air preaching demands a complete trust in the Spirit of God who will open the hearts of the ungodly so that they may hear the truth, believe the truth, and follow the truth.

7. Open-Air Preaching Builds Boldness and Encourages Other Believers in Evangelism & Soul-Winning.

Every time the open-air preacher ascends the "box" upon which he will preach, spiritual battles rage. No open-air preacher is immune to fear. However, as the preacher stands in the open fields and in the public squares and lifts his voice to the glory of God and exalts the gospel of grace, he builds boldness in his bones. Furthermore, he encourages other believers to see that God works through faithful messengers who take the biblical gospel and impart it faithfully to sinners so that they may hear the truth.

8. Open-Air Preaching Shouts the Gospel of God to the Glory of God as an Act of Worship to God with Profound Joy in Christ!

If for no other reason at all, open air preaching is effective because the man of God preaches the gospel of God to God. God loves to hear His own Word. God cannot refuse to listen to His own Word when His servants speak it back to Him! When a man takes the gospel and has the sole passion to glorify God in the lifting up of His voice, God *will* be glorified. In this kind of spiritual service, it is an act of worship on the preacher's part to God and thus God is honored and magnified. Furthermore, the evangelist has an unspeakably wonderful and a supernaturally profound joy in Christ as he preaches the gospel. Even if no one outwardly repents and even if there are no seeming visible changes on the street at that time, the open-air preacher can confidently assert that he uplifted God's gospel and that Christ was magnified and worshiped. When this happens, this guarantees the effectiveness of open-air preaching.