

THE KIND OF MAN TO OPEN AIR PREACH

Geoffrey R. Kirkland
Christ Fellowship Bible Church

Open air preaching is biblical. It is one divinely-appointed means of proclaiming the gospel to the lost. But the question must be asked: *what kind of man should stand, open the Bible, and herald?*

I. A PARDONED Man

The kind of man that may open air preach must be, first and foremost, a converted man. He must have received the full pardon of all His sins by the shed blood of Jesus Christ at Calvary. This man must have himself fled to Jesus Christ before he stands up before crowds and calls them to find refuge in this Savior. He must cling to Christ as Lord and as Savior so that he doesn't hypocritically call others to do what he himself hasn't done. He must truly be regenerated. This converted man, indwelt by the Spirit of God, is able then to know the things of God and to proclaim them with power. True unction, Spirit-given empowerment, comes to the man who is saved by God and full of love for God. He is saved and is a new creation. He has a burden for the lost because he knows that, apart from the sovereign grace of God, he would himself still walk on a path headlong for eternal perdition. But praise be to God that His sufficient grace has intervened and saved him. So the open air preacher must genuinely be saved. Otherwise, it's a mere show, or religious ceremony. God does not want merely more preaching on the streets; God uses godly, converted, burdened, and Christ-loving men who love God, love others, trust the Bible, and are convinced of eternal hell to stand and proclaim the only saving message found in the substitutionary, wrath-bearing atonement of Jesus Christ when he paid for the sins of His people once for all and was raised from the dead for their justification.

2. A PURE Man

The kind of man that may open air preach must not only be pardoned, but he must also be pure. He must be a sanctified man. The herald must be holy. The man who lifts his voice to proclaim Christ must diligently mortify his sin. Those whom God saves He sanctifies. Those whom He regenerates, He changes. Not all men of God who *want* to preach *should*. There are some saved men but they're not diligent in killing sin, pursuing Christ, putting off the old, putting on the new, reading the Word, and praying with fervency and confidence. The open air preacher must be pure. He must meet the qualifications of Scripture. That is, he must be above reproach in his character. He must be a family man before he's an open air preaching man. He must disciple his wife and shepherd his children adequately. Any man who ignores and abandons his family for the ministry of open air preaching has sinned and must repent, be cleansed, and re-orient his priorities. He must be self-controlled, not given to any substance, dignified, honorable, having a good reputation with outsiders (especially this pertains to open air preachers who deal with nonbelievers and with civil authorities). He must be, of course, able to teach.

3. A PREPARED Man

The kind of man who may open air preach must also be a prepared man. The whole life of a preacher is a sort of preparation for every sermon. But he must specifically be preparing for each time he heralds. Preaching is not *sharing*. It's not *chatting*. It's not *gaining a crowd*. Preaching is speaking the very words of God to people so that they may hear the Truth that God has revealed, from the man whom God has sent, so the Spirit who has all power, can draw sinners who hear the gospel to Jesus Christ. Thus, the open air preacher must study before he preaches. He must stand and know what he's going to say. He must not fumble around. God needs no preachers who fumble their way through sermons. Prophets don't fumble nor do they pontificate. They say God's words and then they sit down till they have something else to say to the people. Not only must the open air preacher study but he must labor in prayer. O how utterly essential this is. The open air preacher must beg God to come upon him with power! He must beg God to intervene and supernaturally work. The preacher must depend wholly upon God. If he does not pray then he does not trust in God; then he is a prideful man and he must never think he speaks for God. The true open air preacher must labor in prayer for the souls that will hear him on the streets. He must be full of the Spirit, full of the Word, full of prayer, and full of anticipation of what God will do through his weakness, by the gospel, for His own glory!

4. A PASSIONATE Man

The kind of man who may open air preach must have much passion. Preaching is not entertainment nor is it a mere lecture. There is teaching in preaching but preaching is not limited to teaching. Preaching is logic on fire. It is a man with a mission because he's been given a message from God that has burned in his soul and he has one unconquerable passion: to see the dead quickened to new life by faith, and faith alone, in Jesus Christ! The open air preacher has a zealous passion about him because he knows hell is real, the flames are crackling, and life is short. So he knows that every time he preaches, eternity hangs in the balances. He feels the urgency of the moment since there are those who may hear him preach and they may die before they ever hear the gospel uttered again. Eternity may grip them and hell may swallow them. Open air preaching is nothing less than battling for souls. Knowing the fear of the Lord, the Apostle said, Christians persuade men. Open air preachers are not ashamed to beg, that is, to beg sinners to repent and turn to Christ in faith alone. He must have an indomitable zeal to win souls to Christ. He must understand the gospel -- what he's been saved from and where he is going -- and he must preach as if he can smell the fires of hell and hear the singing of heaven. Eternity is soon-coming! He preaches with a pursuit, a passion, and a purpose: to see spiritual corpses rise to new life by the sovereign working of the Spirit of God through the preached gospel of grace. The preacher must be inflamed with a passion for Christ's glory and for God's exaltation. Indeed, the open air preacher must believe in the sovereignty of God. The Spirit draws men to salvation. It is the preacher who makes Christ known, as Paul said, "Him we proclaim." The preacher must preach Christ and trust God with His work of saving. The preacher must take everyone to Calvary in the faithful declaration of the full gospel and then trust God for the supernatural work of converting the soul.