



LESSON 37

Open-Air Preaching, Part 2

“The open-air speaker’s calling is as honorable as it is arduous, as useful as it is laborious. God alone can sustain you in it, but with Him at your side you will have nothing to fear.”

CHARLES SPURGEON

Kirk’s Comment

The first time I saw the videos *Open-Air Preaching in New York* and *In Season, Out of Season* (available on our website), I was inspired beyond words. My heart was crying out, “Yes, that’s it! That’s what I want to do!”—except I couldn’t imagine me ever having the courage to do it. But God had no plans of leaving me as an evangelistic chicken. Within months, not only was I compelled to stand up and speak to a crowd, even my own mother felt led to climb up on a box and say a few words!

QUESTIONS & OBJECTIONS

“What should I say if someone asks, ‘Have you ever lusted?’”

An individual may challenge you on this issue while you’re going through the Ten Commandments with him. Take care when answering. There is such a thing as being too candid. A U.S. president became synonymous with the word “lust” because he lacked discretion in answering this question. Soften your answer with, “I have broken all of the Ten Commandments in spirit, if not in letter.” That will not only defuse the issue, but



If you are fortunate enough to get a heckler, don't panic. Show him genuine respect, not only because he can double your crowd, but because the Bible says to honor all men, so you don't want to offend him unnecessarily. Ask the heckler his name, so that if you want to ask him a question and he is talking to someone, you don't have to say, "Hey, you!"

Often, people will walk through the crowd so they can get close to you and whisper something like, "I think you are a #@*!\$!" Answer loud enough for the crowd to hear, "God bless you." Do it with a smile so that it looks as though the person has just whispered a word of encouragement to you. This will stop him from doing it again. The Bible says to bless those who curse you, and to do good to those who hate you.

Remember that you are not fighting against flesh and blood. Hecklers will stoop very low and be cutting and cruel in their remarks. If you have some physical disability, they will play on it. Try to smile back at them. Look past the words. If you are reviled for the name of Jesus, "rejoice, and be exceeding glad." Read Matthew 5:10–12 until it is written on the corridors of your mind.

The angriest hecklers are usually what we call "backsliders." These are actually false converts who never slid forward in the first place. They "asked Jesus into their heart" but never truly repented. Ask him, "Did you know the Lord?" If he answers, "Yes," then he is admitting that he is willfully denying Him. If he answers, "No," then he was never a Christian in the first place—"This is eternal life, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

Make the Bullet Hit the Target

It is obvious from Scripture that God requires us not only to preach to sinners, but also to teach them. The servant of the Lord must be "able to teach, patient, in meekness instructing" those who oppose them (2 Timothy 2:24,25). For a long while I thought I was to leap among sinners, scatter the seed, then leave. But our responsibility goes further. We are to bring the sinner to a point of understanding his need before God. Psalm 25:8 says, "Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way." Psalm 51:13 adds, "Then will I teach transgressors your ways; and sinners shall be converted to you." The Great Commission is to teach



sinners: “teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things” (Matthew 28:19,20). The disciples obeyed the command: “daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to *teach* and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42, emphasis added).

The “good-soil” hearer is he who “hears . . . and *understands*” (Matthew 13:23). Philip the evangelist saw fit to ask his potential convert, the Ethiopian, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Some preachers are like a loud gun that misses the target. It may sound effective, but if the bullet misses the target, the exercise is in vain. He may be the largest-lunged, chandelier-swinging, pulpit-pounding preacher this side of the Book of Acts. He may have great teaching on faith, and everyone he touches may fall over, but if the sinner leaves the meeting failing to understand his desperate need of God’s forgiveness, then the preacher has failed. He has missed the target, which is the understanding of the sinner. Sinners will not flee from the wrath to come until they understand that they are guilty and under condemnation.

This is why the Law of God must be used in preaching. It brings “the knowledge of sin” and serves as a “schoolmaster” leading sinners to the Savior. It teaches and instructs. A sinner will come to “know His will, and approve the things that are more excellent,” if he is “instructed out of the Law” (Romans 2:18).

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it beneficial to have a heckler when you’re preaching open-air?

2. How should you respond to a heckler?



3. How can you deal with a “mumbling heckler”?

4. What should you do if you are “reviled” for the name of Jesus?

5. Why is it important to bring “understanding” to your hearers?

6. How does the Law bring understanding?

PREACHER’S PROGRESS

Miss Communication: “God is all-loving.”

Christian: “No, He’s not.”

Miss Communication: “Yes, He is. The Bible says so.”

Christian: “No, it doesn’t. It says that God is love.”

Miss Communication: “See.”

Christian: “But that doesn’t say He’s all-loving. He’s not a slave to love. The Bible reveals that He’s also just, holy, and righteous.”

Miss Communication: “So . . . what does that mean?”



Christian: “When people say God is all-loving, they are implying God is so loving that He wouldn’t send people to hell.”

Miss Communication: “Well, if He was loving, He wouldn’t send anyone to hell.”

Christian: “I have a question for you. If a man sexually abused children, tortured them, cut their throats, and said he would do it again if he had half a chance, should a judge punish him?”

Miss Communication: “Of course.”

Christian: “What if the judge is a loving man?”

Miss Communication: “He should still punish that wicked person.”

Christian: “Right . . . and God will punish all wicked men, even though He is ‘love.’ Does that make sense?”

Miss Communication: “Now it does.”

FEATHERS FOR ARROWS

Ira Sankey, before he became D. L. Moody’s famous song leader (and a powerful preacher himself), was assigned to night duty in the American Civil War. While he was on duty, he lifted his eyes toward heaven and began to sing, praising the Lord while he was alone. At least, he thought he was alone.

Years later, after the war had ended, Sankey was on a ship traveling across the Atlantic Ocean. Since he was now a famous singer, a crowd of people approached him and asked him to sing. He lifted his eyes toward heaven and sang a beautiful hymn.

After his song, a man from the crowd asked him if, on a certain night during the Civil War, he had performed night duty for a certain infantry unit. “Yes, I did,” was his reply.

The man continued, “I was on the opposite side of the war, and I was hiding in a bush near your camp. With my rifle aimed at your head, I was about to shoot you when you looked toward heaven and began to sing. I



Memory Verse

“Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

**MATTHEW
5:11,12**

thought, ‘Well, I like music, and this guy has a nice voice. I’ll sit here, let him sing the song, . . . and then shoot him. He’s not going anywhere.’ But then I realized what you were singing. It was the same hymn my mother used to sing at my bedside when I was a child. And it’s the same hymn you sang tonight! I tried, but that night during the Civil War, I was powerless to shoot you.”

Ira Sankey pointed that man to Christ. He and thousands of others were saved under Sankey’s ministry. All this stemmed from the fact that Sankey praised the Lord at all times.

Last Words

Horace Greeley, journalist and founder of the *New York Tribune*, uttered these words when dying:

“I know that my Redeemer liveth.”