

A CERTAIN
SOUND

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A Primer on Open Air Preaching

Ryan Denton and Scott Smith



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A Certain Sound

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Foreword

I am excited to see the publication of this book, for it is the first biblically balanced and theologically informed book I have ever read on open air preaching. Here you will find no zeal without knowledge, but rather zeal inflamed by love and directed by the Word of God. As such, it offers a corrective both to those sluggish to evangelize in public and to those who do evangelize but with rash and foolish pride that dishonors Christ.

Three factors make this book especially practical. First, it grounds evangelism upon Reformed theology, including the proper evangelistic use of the moral law and apologetics. This doctrinal foundation supports the open air preacher with God-centered wisdom and tremendous encouragement in trials. Second, this book addresses the relationship of the open air preacher to the local church. Too often, such evangelists act like rogue elephants—-independent, vicious, and dangerous. Denton and Smith call for public evangelists rooted in the body of Christ and submissive to its leadership. Third, the authors offer good counsel for what the open air preacher can expect in different settings and how best to respond. This is crucial, for open air preaching will be opposed, and the preacher must respond to persecution in a manner fitting to the gospel he preaches.

May God use this book in churches, Christian schools, and seminaries to raise up preachers who will reach out more boldly and lovingly to perishing sinners outside the church's assemblies, and to stir up the whole church to support them in fervent prayer.

—Joel R. Beeke

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

Acknowledgments

This book would be impossible and irrelevant without the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, the One “which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). He alone deserves all the glory, so I dedicate this book to Him. I’m grateful for my wife, Tasha, whose simple devotion to the Lord humbles me on a daily basis. She is the best example I know of “a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:4). I’m also grateful for my parents, pastors Joe Rosales and Jerry Minor, and all the men preaching the gospel in the open air, whose aim is to preach, die, be forgotten, and “endure all things for the elect’s sakes” (2 Tim. 2:10).

—Ryan Denton

I dedicate this book to Christ Himself, the author and finisher of my faith. I love the Lord and long to bring Him some small measure of glory before He calls me home. I also dedicate this book to my wonderful wife, Patte. She is the greatest Christian I have ever met and has influenced so many believers to take up their cross, deny themselves, and get active in advancing the Lord’s fame. I have been encouraged and strengthened by her companionship and example. She taught me, “You can’t plow a field by turning it over in your mind.” Finally, I am grateful to my close friend Bill Adams and other fellow street preachers: Ryan Denton, Mike Stockwell, Jimmy Hamilton, Robert Gray, Don Karns, Shawn Holes, and Bobby McCreery. They are the off-scouring of the world and the red-headed stepchildren in the body of Christ. The Lord Himself will own them on the last day.

—Scott Smith

Introduction

This book is not an exhaustive analysis of open air preaching. The subject is too broad for such an endeavor, especially considering all the different ways to go about it. At the end of the day, we recognize there is no black-and-white approach. As with any kind of preaching, it must be biblical and bathed in prayer. But each preacher will approach the task differently. That is not to say there is no “right way” or proper theology when it comes to open air preaching. There is, and this book will demonstrate both.

As Charles Spurgeon and others have pointed out, no defense is necessary when it comes to publicly proclaiming the gospel.¹ Yet it is important to know that open air preaching is not some kind of whimsical or unbiblical method for getting the gospel to the lost, nor should it be treated as some idolized form of delivery. We by no means believe that everyone should preach in the open air, nor do we think it is necessarily the best or only method of evangelism. Likewise, we do not believe that open air preaching has more priority than pulpit preaching. The two should never be in conflict with one another. Open air preaching is simply a means of reaching people outside the church with God’s Word.

We do hope, however, that this book answers critics or skeptics of open air preaching. The church and professing Christians often look

1. Spurgeon goes so far as to say, “No sort of defense is needed for preaching out-of-doors; but it would need very potent arguments to prove that a man had done his duty who has never preached beyond the walls of his meetinghouse. A defense is required rather for services within buildings than for worship outside of them.” Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 254.

down on it. Sometimes rightly so, but more often than not, the concern is unfounded. We hope that critics will approach this book with a patient openness to a method of evangelism that is seen in the Bible and throughout church history. We want them to see that it can be done in a proper, biblical way and that this form of preaching has harvested much fruit for the kingdom of God. We also desire that this book will stimulate more churchgoers and pastors to get behind their local evangelists. Oftentimes ignorance and bad experiences can taint our view of things. But a few bad apples should not spoil the whole bunch. Just because there are bad pastors and bad churches in the world does not mean all are that way, and it certainly does not mean that all pastors and churches should be dismissed. The same holds true for open air preaching.

We also hope this book can be useful to preachers across the world. A resurgence of open air preaching is happening worldwide: America, Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico, and even India and South America are seeing preachers rise up on the streets of many cities. While only a few such ministers labored in the 1970s and 1980s, today a kind of revival is taking place when it comes to open air preaching. This is terrific, but only to the extent that it is being done in a proper way, which is why so much of this book focuses on Reformed theology, church history, the importance of the church, and the character and manner of the preacher. He cannot just “wing it.” As encouraging as it is to see open air preaching done throughout the world, it is just as discouraging to see preaching laced with bad theology, disrespect for the church, and no regard for the manner of the preacher. This book seeks to be useful in these areas as well.

Lastly, it is our passion to see open air preaching being encouraged and taught at seminaries and churches across the country. We are aware of only a handful of seminaries in the world that encourage their men to open air preach. Budding ministers have no better preparation for some of the challenges of ministry than preaching on the streets. It will help them to mortify their flesh, fear, and pride—the constant enemies of every minister in the church. It will teach them how to respond to the rebukes of an unbelieving society, equipping them to defend the faith against cults, world religions, and the atheists of our day. Perhaps most importantly, it will help them to be better preachers in the pulpit.

Spurgeon encouraged his pupils to be active in open air preaching the moment they started pastoring: “One of the earliest things that a minister should do when he leaves college and settles in a country town or village is to begin open air speaking.”² We encourage every seminary in the world to establish in their students a similar passion for open air preaching. We hope this book helps ministers and professors train pupils for such a task. Many are called to the work of open air preaching without any idea of how to begin. This book seeks to guard young men against mistakes we have made in our own ministries. It seeks to encourage the preacher to continue sowing the gospel in public despite the constant antagonism that will come against such a calling.

In the end, we recognize that no book could ever fully prepare someone for public evangelism. The best instructor is the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God. The best way to learn is to go out and preach. Some open air preachers may be more qualified than we are to delve into this topic. There are surely better writers. But by the grace of God we have experienced what it is to preach in the trenches on a daily basis. Ryan Denton is a Reformed Baptist and a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has engaged in open air preaching as both a pastor and evangelist and is the director of Christ in the Wild Ministries, based out of El Paso and Albuquerque. Scott Smith is a graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary and an active Presbyterian. He has preached in the open air for more than ten years and has trained hundreds of preachers and labored with thousands more around the world. He is the director of Schoolmaster Ministries, based in Raleigh, North Carolina.

We have seen positive aspects of open air preaching that need to be encouraged and stressed, but we have also made and seen many mistakes that should be avoided. We have experienced the frustration of not knowing how to preach in the streets yet knowing we were called to do it. We know the disappointment when some pastors, seminaries, and ministries suggest that open air preaching should no longer be done. We hope this book is an antidote to such difficulties. At the end of the day, like evangelism, this book was like “a burning fire shut up in [our] bones” (Jer. 20:9) and had to be put on paper.

2. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 275.

The title, *A Certain Sound*, comes from Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 14:8: "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" Paul is encouraging the church to speak with clear, intelligible speech whenever uttering God's Word. The same must be said for the preacher and, indeed, could be said for this book. We are attempting to make "a certain sound." As far as we know, there has never been a distinctly Reformed primer on open air preaching. This is an attempt to fill that void. We hope this book aids preachers to make a sound that glorifies God and magnifies His sovereign grace, that calls all people everywhere to repent and believe the gospel, that points preachers toward the high calling of making much of Christ, that advances the Lord's kingdom and brings honor to His name. Anything less would be a muddled message and a waste of time.

SOLI DEO GLORIA
GLORY TO GOD ALONE

PART ONE

**THEOLOGY OF OPEN AIR
PREACHING**

Chapter One

A History of Open Air Preaching

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

—Mark 16:20

In a culture where pragmatic evangelism and seeker-friendly churches are in vogue, it is natural that many will think open air preaching is scandalous. Such people argue that this kind of preaching had a place in the past but that today, in our more “cosmopolitan” culture, we should use talks over coffee or casual Bible studies at home to share the gospel. These people claim it is necessary to build a relationship first in order to “earn the right” to share the gospel. People have changed, they argue, and so should our methods. Sadly, this is not a caricature. This view of evangelism is rampant in the Western church today. But it is critical to understand that society and even the church in general have never been accepting of open air preaching. It has always been shocking. Consider the following from a 2009 interview with Paul Washer:

Spurgeon was constantly attacked in his culture for the openness of his faith and the openness of his preaching. If you go back to the time of Whitefield and just look at the political cartoons written against Whitefield, I mean, he was considered an absolute fanatic, a crazy man. Why? *Because he preached in the open air.* John and Charles Wesley in England, Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland. *It has never been with the culture to do open air evangelism....* It has been against culture since the moment the apostle Paul stood up

in that great coliseum and spoke the Word of God. It has always been against culture.¹

Whether the open air preacher wears a suit and tie or a T-shirt and tennis shoes, whether his manner is boisterous or soft, direct or winsome, the natural man will always see such preaching as offensive. The church in general will see it as an affront. And from man's perspective, its fruit has usually been scarce. The apostle Paul was such a preacher. Far from being "successful," he was beaten, lashed, stoned, and rejected by Jews, Gentiles, and even professing Christians (2 Cor. 11:25). He was seen by most as vile and oafish. Paul and others have demonstrated that the offense of the cross and "the foolishness of preaching" (1 Cor. 1:21) is never so apparent as when one is heralding it in the middle of a crowd.

From time immemorial, civilizations of all types have used messengers to stand in public and announce news. God has designed man to hear messages and respond to them. People around the world preached and still preach out in the open to get their message to as many as possible. There is no need to dramatize or complicate or puff up open air preaching. It is merely a way for men and women to hear a word from God. Christ commands His disciples to go into all the world and "preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15), teaching others "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). This is all that any kind of preaching seeks to do—get the message of Christ into the ears of the people.

Open air preaching comes down to us from a long tradition of men in the Bible who proclaimed God's Word in the public square. From Genesis to Revelation, God's servants are seen preaching without the aid of a pulpit or even a church building. This is not to downplay the importance of either of these. Every Christian should have a high regard for both. It is merely to show that the Bible never prohibits the ministry of open air preaching. On the contrary, it shows this to be the method most preferred by the saints of old. The reason for this is simple

1. Cameron Buettel, "Cameron Buettel Interviews Paul Washer," Sermon Audio, July 23, 2009, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?m=t&s=723091214300> (emphasis added).

and by no means outdated. The preachers of Scripture found out where the lost were congregating, then went and preached to them. How superfluous man's ways are when compared to Scripture. Think of how many hours are spent strategizing about evangelism in classrooms and church meetings around the country. Think of the methods the Western church has come up with to win the lost to Christ. The Scriptures show us a simpler way: find the lost, then get the gospel to them. Open air preaching provides a way to get the gospel to a large group of people at one time and is designed to reach those who would not typically go to church or have a conversation about God.

Nowhere does Scripture give an explicit command to preach inside. In fact, with the exception of synagogues, only rarely do we find anyone preaching inside the confines of a building. This is the opposite of today's mind-set. Ministers and Christians often assume that preaching can only be done inside in a formal, prearranged way. Again, the pulpit ministry should never be denigrated. It is one of God's chief means for bringing the Word to His people. But in Scripture, open air preaching is the typical approach, not the exception, and it is rarely formal or prearranged. Spurgeon notes, "We are at full liberty to believe that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, when he prophesied, asked for no better pulpit than the hillside, and that Noah, as a preacher of righteousness, was willing to reason with his contemporaries in the shipyard wherein his marvelous ark was builded."² Some may argue that Enoch and Noah preached in the open air because they had no edifices to preach in or that if they had church buildings and pulpits in those days, the preachers of Scripture would have confined themselves to these rather than preach outside. Such speculation is irrelevant. Although we would never claim that indoor preaching is wrong, it would likewise be a mistake to assume that outdoor preaching is a secondary or lesser form.

Consider also the Mosaic era, in which preachers chose to proclaim the oracles of God in the fields, beneath the blue skies, even though worship was becoming more ritualized and the tabernacle was already erected. As Edwin Byington states, "Moses, during the time of his leadership, gave extensive and minute directions for public worship, but closed his ministry without having authorized the erection of a covered

2. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 234.

auditorium for the worshipers.”³ If God had desired to establish a ritual for indoor preaching, it would have been while establishing these other rituals for worship. But God did not. Nor did things change with Joshua. Presumably all his addresses were made in the field. Likewise during the time of the judges and in the days of Samuel and Saul. We do not mean to imply that indoor preaching has not been sanctioned or approved by God. We merely point out that all of these men are shown to be delivering God’s Word in the open.

David’s and Solomon’s reigns provide us with perhaps the best illustration of this preference for outdoor preaching. Dwellings were then permanent. The king had a palace. The temple was being planned and built. Yet religious addresses were still made outside. Even after the temple was finished, Solomon chose to make his dedicatory address out in the open. On this point Byington says, “The Lord had His Temple, with the holy place covered, the people had their houses, but the worshipers continued to assemble in the courts of the Lord’s house and other open places, as their fathers did before them in the wilderness.”⁴ Solomon’s wisdom books provide us with one of the most striking illustrations of open air proclamation in the entire Bible: “Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words” (Prov. 1:20–21).

This argument is further confirmed when we turn to the Old Testament prophets: Elijah preached on Mount Carmel; Jonah preached in the streets of Nineveh with a simple, forceful message that brought the entire city to repentance (Jonah 3:1–5); Jeremiah heralded the words of God in the valley of Hinnom and in “the gate of the LORD’s house,” preaching sin and doom, proclaiming the very words of God (Jer. 7:1–3). Note that many of these prophets, especially Jeremiah, preached without the authority of the priests. Jeremiah was struck by one of the priests because of his message and even thrown into prison and a well. Although we believe that preachers should be sent out and held accountable by their local church, it is crucial to see that in an era when

3. Edwin Byington, *Open-Air Preaching: A Practical Manual for Pastors, Evangelists, and Other Christian Workers* (Hartford, Conn.: Hartford Theological Seminary, 1892), 9.

4. Byington, *Open-Air Preaching*, 9.

open air preaching was scorned by most of the Israelite community, Jeremiah and the other prophets not only continued to preach but had a command from God to do so, as William Evans highlights:

The sublime evangelical predictions of Isaiah; the mournful dirges of Jeremiah; the symbolical and picturesque visions of Ezekiel—all these, for the most part, were announced in the streets of the great cities of Jerusalem and Babylon. Throughout the streets of Ninevah resounded the warning voice of the prophet Jonah. The message of Micah, Nahum, and the rest of the minor prophets was, without question, “a song of the winds.” Nehemiah’s great revival sermon was preached in the street of Jerusalem, close to the water-gate (Neh. 8:1, 3).⁵

The places where the prophets preached would have been thronging with people. Their messages were unsavory to most, even though the people were “religious.” These men used no tricks or methods. They sought out the people and preached to them, regardless of their relationship with them. They preached the Word of God regardless of the response to their message. They did not concern themselves with earning the people’s trust. They knew the message was from God, and they had been told to preach it. It mattered little whether they preached in a busy street or on top of a hill. An audience of strangers or friends made no difference. They knew that the preached Word, not their relationship with the audience, contained the power of God unto salvation. Even postexilic Israel preferred public spaces as the place of proclamation. Ezra commanded the people of Israel to repent as they sat “in the street of the house of God” (Ezra 10:9–14). He preached from a raised outdoor platform and explained the Word of God to the people (Nehemiah 8 and 9 show the same thing). Open air preaching was the evangelism method most preferred by Old Testament preachers.

This never changes in the New Testament either, when cultures become more settled and “sophisticated.” Even though open air preaching was no longer the only or even expected method, it was still commonly used by God. In fact, it expands in the New Testament beyond the scope of what we see in the Old. John the Baptist preached

5. William Evans, *Open Air Preaching* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1901), 4–5.

this way. As a Jew he would have had access to the synagogues, but he decisively chose to stay away from them. The New Testament never suggests that he sought them out, nor does it condemn him for this, recognizing instead that “among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist,” an open air preacher (Luke 7:28). Jesus Himself preached on mountains, seashores, in the city streets, even on the edge of a well. These men sought out the people and preached to them. Nothing cute or trendy. They simply trusted in the power of the preached Word of God and went out and proclaimed it.

Jesus not only preached in the open but also commissioned the disciples to do so. When they are sent forth to preach the kingdom of heaven, there is no mention of Jesus telling them to make friends or influence people first. He never tells them to preach only in the synagogues. Although they likely shared the gospel in houses, much of the work must have been done outside. And when they were rejected, as Jesus predicted, they are told to shake the dust from their feet and go to another city, preaching again (Matt. 10:14; Luke 9:5–6). He knew they would be mocked. He knew the preaching of the gospel would be a scandal to most. But He says to go forth and do it anyway. In the parable of the marriage feast, we read the lord of the feast say to the servant, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). This is an exemplary sentence for the aim of open air preaching, and it comes from the mouth of our Lord. Christ’s disciples were sent out to “compel” the people to “come in.”

After Pentecost the disciples went to the streets with their message, which explains the enormous number of new converts piling into the church. Peter proclaimed the Word of God at Solomon’s Portico, which would have been outside (Acts 3:11–26). Philip preached on the streets of Samaria (Acts 8:6–8). It is true Paul and others preached in synagogues, but their most memorable seasons came while preaching in the open air. The entire city of Antioch was shaken by Paul’s outdoor deliveries (Acts 13:44–52). His first European convert came as a result of open air evangelism (Acts 16:11–15). His address on Mars Hill was in the middle of the city, away from the confines of any synagogue (Acts 17:22–34). When taken into custody by the Roman guards, Paul preached to “men, brethren, and fathers” (Acts 22:1) from the castle

stairs as the Jews attempted to mob him. Apollos publicly refuted the Jews on the streets of Achaia (Acts 18:27–28). These few examples alone force us to conclude that open air preaching was the preferred method of spreading the gospel in both the Old and New Testaments.

Jesus left His disciples with the command to go into all the world and preach the gospel, but of course the world is not restricted to those within the church. It also consists of people who have never worshiped inside a church and would never do so unless they were saved. Thus, to preach the gospel to the world, Christ's disciples must go outside the church building to do it. We must "get all we can into the churches, and there preach to them, and then to 'go out into the streets and lanes of the cities, and into the highways and hedges,' and hunt up all the rest, and preach to them also."⁶ There was a time in Western culture when most people, including the lost, would come to church. Those days no longer exist. The church must go to the lost. There will always be more lost people outside church walls than within, which is why preaching must also happen wherever the lost may be. The command is not, "Go into all the world and tell people to come to church." Nor is it, "Go into all the world and be good examples to the lost." Nor is the command to build houses or even relationships. All the above are fine things to do. But when it comes to preaching and, more particularly, evangelism, we must never substitute relationships for the gospel. The command is to go into the world and preach the gospel. As Spurgeon illustrates, this is what open air preaching seeks to do: "The great benefit of open-air preaching is that we get so many newcomers to hear the Gospel who otherwise would never hear it. The Gospel command is, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,' but it is so little obeyed that one would imagine that it ran thus, 'Go into your own place of worship and preach the Gospel to the few creatures who will come inside.'"⁷ Whenever the lost are gathered, a preacher should always be preaching to them, because "how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14).

What about examples in church history? Do we see any cessation of open air preaching as the church progresses and becomes more

6. William Taylor, *Seven Years' Street Preaching in San Francisco* (London: Forgotten Books, 2015), 18.

7. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 275.

established? On the contrary, Spurgeon points out, “It would be very easy to prove revivals of religion have usually been accompanied, if not caused, by a considerable amount of preaching out of doors, or in unusual places.”⁸ According to the church historian Eusebius, the disciples of the first apostles “everywhere prosecuted the preaching of the gospel, sowing the seeds of heavenly doctrine throughout the whole world.”⁹ Michael Green says the same thing in his book, *Evangelism in the Early Church*: “The evidence is not as full as we should like, but there can be no doubt that this open air evangelism continued throughout the first two centuries. . . . Irenaeus was accustomed to preaching in the market places not only of the city of Lugdunum but also of the market towns and villages round about. Cyprian even dared the authorities to arrest him as he preached in the market place during a period of persecution.”¹⁰ Green says in another place that the early church “had a penchant for small open air meetings. . . . It is salutary to recall that the early Christians had no churches during the first two centuries, the time of their major expansion. They had perforce to use the open air.”¹¹

The same penchant for public evangelism can be seen as the gospel advanced through the centuries. Sometimes this was due to the lack of buildings for Christians to gather in, but more often than not it was simply for the sake of getting the gospel to the lost. In 633, for example, at the dawn of the Middle Ages, King Oswald of Northumbria sent for a bishop named Aldan for the purpose of evangelizing his territory. Church buildings had not yet been established, so Aldan is said to have “entered into evangelization on horseback.”¹²

Crowded markets and thoroughfares were always seen as excellent opportunities for proclaiming the gospel. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) became “a public preacher of considerable distinction” when a group of monks were thrown out of their seclusion and “into

8. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 275.

9. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 274.

10. Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 304.

11. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 23.

12. David L. Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 110.

the highways and byways of public concourse.”¹³ He was one of the first monks to bring gospel preaching outside of the cloister. People were milling about the streets, so the monks began to preach.

Arnold of Brescia (1090–1155) is another example. He proclaimed the Word of God to great crowds in Brescia, eventually heading to Rome, where he “denounced papal usurpations at the very gates of the Vatican.”¹⁴ Arnold was a monk who became so infuriated by Roman Catholic teachings that he “took his stand in the streets of his native Brescia, and began to thunder forth his scheme of reform.”¹⁵ Some time later, the bishop of Brescia “found his entire flock deserting the cathedral and assembling daily in the marketplace, crowding round the eloquent preacher, and listening with applause to his fierce philippics, so that he bestirred himself to silence the courageous monk.”¹⁶ Eventually Arnold was burned alive by Roman Catholic authorities.

Interestingly enough, Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), the man traditionally credited with the phrase “Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words,” is said to have “usually preached out of doors, in the marketplaces, from church steps, from the walls of castle courtyards.”¹⁷ Although we vehemently disagree with the doctrine these men preached, they show us that open air preaching has always been a valuable means for getting the gospel to the lost, even before the Reformation.

The Protestant Reformation came about in large part through publicly preaching the gospel. Henry of Lausanne in the twelfth century is reported to have preached against transubstantiation on the streets. John Wycliffe, the “morning star” of the Reformation, was the figurehead of a group in England who regularly preached against Roman Catholicism in the open air.¹⁸ This kind of evangelism led the way for the men we now call the Reformers. John Knox began his ministry as

13. Larsen, *Company of the Preachers*, 111.

14. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 275.

15. J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, vol. 1 (London: Cassell & Company, 1880), 52.

16. Wylie, *History of Protestantism*, 1:52.

17. EWTN, “St. Francis of Assisi: Founder of the Franciscan Order,” accessed May 25, 2018, <http://www.ewtn.com/saintsHoly/saints/F/stfrancisofofassisi.asp>.

18. James Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1908), 47.

a bodyguard for a street preacher. When the preacher was martyred, Knox regularly preached “faith alone by grace alone in Christ alone” in the same manner as his predecessor.¹⁹ Without open air preaching, the Protestant faith might have been much slower in its break from Roman Catholicism. One could even ask, as Spurgeon does, whether the Reformation would have come about at all if not for this kind of preaching: “Where would the Reformation have been if its great preachers had confined themselves to churches and cathedrals? How would the common people have become indoctrinated with the Gospel had it not been for those far-wandering evangelists, the colporteurs, and those daring innovators who found a pulpit on every heap of stones, and an audience chamber in every open space near the abodes of men?”²⁰

Every generation of the church seems to have had men preaching in this way. John Bunyan, George Whitefield, John Wesley, and Charles Spurgeon regularly did so. George Whitefield said, “I never was more acceptable to my Master than when I was standing to teach those hearers in the open fields.”²¹ Elsewhere he said, “I now preach to ten times more people than I should, if I had been confined to the Churches.”²² John Wesley recorded, “I am well assured I did far more good to my Lincolnshire parishioners by preaching three days on my father’s tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit.”²³ Elsewhere he admitted, “To this day field preaching is a cross to me, but I know my commission and see no other way of preaching the gospel to every creature.”²⁴ It could be argued that the eighteenth-century Welsh Revival came about through the open air preaching of Daniel Rowland, Howell Harris, and others.²⁵ Another revival in India came in part through the work of William

19. Gervase N. Charmley, “John Knox: The Making of a Reformer,” *Banner of Truth*, October 21, 2015, <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2015/john-knox-the-making-of-a-reformer/>.

20. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 254.

21. Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: God’s Anointed Servant* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1990), 46.

22. Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival*, vol. 1 (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1970), 61.

23. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times*, 1:122.

24. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times*, 1:221.

25. See especially both volumes of John Morgan Jones and William Morgan, *The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales* (1890; repr., Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 2016).

Carey.²⁶ Robert Flockhart was one convert of Carey's ministry who, upon returning to Scotland, preached publicly for four decades.²⁷ Horatius Bonar notes how God blessed these men for their outdoor preaching: "They preached and labored in season and out of season, in churches, barns, schoolhouses, streets, or highways, to deal faithfully and closely with men's consciences wherever they may happen to be brought into contact with them.... This is to turn the world upside down, to offend every rule of good breeding, and to tear up the landmarks of civilized society.... *This has ever been one of the great secrets of success.*"²⁸

In modern times, D. L. Moody, Leonard Ravenhill, Paul Washer, Albert N. Martin, Rob Ventura, and even Westminster Theological Seminary professor Cornelius Van Til were all open air preachers. Today it is possible to find people preaching openly in every major city in North America and Western Europe, and a smattering of others in South America, India, and other "hard to reach" areas. It seems conclusive to say that God has always used open air proclamation as a means for getting the gospel to the lost.

26. Edward Glinney, ed., *Missions in a New Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000), 301.

27. Robert Flockhart, *The Street Preacher* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 185–208.

28. Horatius Bonar, *True Revival* (Pensacola, Fla.: Chapel Library, 2000), 11 (emphasis added).

Questions

1. How could studying the Scriptures and church history help the preacher before he goes to the streets?
2. How would you respond to someone who says that open air preaching does not work anymore?
3. What are the best ways to challenge “seeker-friendly” and “friendship evangelism” cultures to consider open air preaching?