



Go, Stand, Speak: The Forgotten Power of the Public Proclamation of the Gospel

INTRO

[And \(Jesus\) said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." Mark 16:15](#)

Eric: (VO – with collection of videos of preachers) When most people think of preaching – proclaiming the Gospel – they picture a minister speaking on a Sunday morning or perhaps Wednesday night. There's a church, usually a pulpit of one kind or another, a congregation -- or viewing audience if the sermon happens to be televised -- and the hopefully Holy Spirit appointed and anointed minister of the Gospel sharing eternal truths from the word of God.

Hello, I'm your host for *Go, Stand Speak: The Forgotten Power of the Public Proclamation of the Gospel* and I'm standing in just such a pulpit at just such a church. This particular sanctuary was founded almost 200 hundred years ago and has been rebuilt twice. And among the ministers who have preached here was Edward McKendree Bounds – or E.M. Bounds as he is better known.

George Grant – Briefly tells who E.M. Bounds was, best known today for his teachings on and exhortation to prayer.

Eric (now outside in Franklin square) But while prayer is Bounds' most well-known and celebrated legacy, he was renowned in his time also for his preaching, sometimes doing so from another sanctuary (as I say this I look around me) like where I am standing right here at the center of town in Franklin, TN. (PAUSE) But no, there was never a church building here; the sanctuary he used in these instances was not made by human hands. You see, E.M. Bounds, like so many great men of God before him, believed in the out-of-doors, public proclamation of the Gospel.

George

Eric: Most Christians know that the word Gospel – *euaggelion* (yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on) in the original Greek – means “the good news.” But in the first century, when the gospel was first being proclaimed from town to town and city to city by the first followers of Jesus, the word also carried with it a military and political connotation as well.

Rob Shearer (Greenleaf Press) explains:

So – as in Acts chapter 8, when Peter and John were sent by the apostolic congress in Jerusalem to present the gospel to villages throughout Samaria (show **Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.** Acts 8:25) or when Phillip left Azotus and preached the gospel in all the towns until he came from Caesarea (show: **But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.** Acts 8:40) there weren't going only from synagogue to synagogue – at the invitation of the local rabbi. Often there was no invitation at all. And even more often, their declarations that men everywhere needed to repent and yield their lives to the true LORD of both heaven and earth were delivered in the same places the Roman heralds used when announcing the ascension of a new Caesar to the throne of both man and God: town squares, markets, arenas and major as well as minor thoroughfares; wherever people congregated so that as many as possible could hear the *euaggelion*, the good news. Publicly... out-of-doors...and, as they say, in your face; the early Christians – and faithful followers of Christ ever since were, in the words of the Apostle Paul “not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”

Show: For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16.

Eric: In this video we're going to examine this power, this means that God has appointed to save men and transform cultures – particularly as it relates to presenting the gospel in the same places – the highways and byways – as the early church. We'll begin where the Christian worldview should always be forged: with the word of God. Does the Bible support, even command that we take the Gospel to our neighbors and to the streets? Next, we will look at how God has used this means throughout Church history. Then we'll examine the present, how and why this basic tool of the Great Commission has been largely ignored, answering common objections and misunderstandings in the process. And we'll then conclude with how you can find and fulfill your part in the Prime Directive given to us by our Lord:

“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” Mark 16:15

Part 2: Thus Sayeth the Lord

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?
And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never
heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

Romans 10:14

We ought actually to go into the streets and lanes and
highways, because there are lurkers in the hedges, tramps on
the highway, street-walkers and lane-haunters, whom we shall
never reach unless we pursue them into their own domains.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Eric: To be a Christian means to belong to Christ – to have a new heart and nature grafted into us by the Holy Spirit through the work of the Jesus' cross, resurrection, and enthronement as the LORD of both heaven and earth. Along with that comes the joyous responsibility – and privilege – to follow, serve, and *obey* Him.

And how do we know what it is we're to obey? Well, as every true Christian knows – the first and best guide to knowing God's will is the Bible. If the LORD declares in it to "Jump!" our only response should be, "How high?"

Larry Tomczak: Has God called every Christian to evangelize the lost? We may just as well ask, "Is every Christian called to love his neighbor as himself?" The answer is obvious in the asking. We're all to love our neighbor and share the Gospel with those who are yet in darkness – which is just another way, perhaps the most important way – of loving them. I firmly believe the world we live in would be a very, very different place if every Christian loved, prayed for, and shared their faith with the lost and supported the work of those who are called to full-time missions and evangelizing.

ERIC: Now there are many ways to evangelize – including supporting those who are called to the Ephesians 4:11 office of an evangelist. But we have to be on guard against the *zeitgeist*, the spirit of our age and its proclivities towards reductionism, individualism, moral relativism and a host of other "isms" which tend to ignore, trivialize and even reject one of the most fundamental, organic and historically effective methods for reaching the lost and standing prophetically against the celebration of sin: that being, of course, open-air preaching. But before we consider this *zeitgeist* and the resistance it has spawned towards the purposes of God, let's put first things first:

Does the Bible support the public proclamation of the Gospel?

Interviews:.....

Given the clear Biblical mandate to take the Gospel of the Kingdom to the very people who need to hear about the King, we must ask ourselves, why is

it so little done, or worse, even despised? If we're to recover the "forgotten power of the public proclamation of the Gospel" we need to be aware and actively repent of and resist the deceptions that war against it.

Number one, as is often the case with matters concerning the human heart, is pride. The First World, with its unprecedented freedoms and prosperity, has fallen prey to precisely what God, through Moses, warned the Israelites: that they would forget who made them prosperous, become proud, pseudo-sophisticated and increasingly lacking in their first love and simple devotion to God.

Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery...lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' **Deuteronomy 8:11-14; 17**

Once this happens, vain imaginations begin to multiply. The worldly philosophies that Paul warned us to eschew proliferate and suddenly the wisdom of this world – what God calls foolish (1 Cor. 1:20) – begins to look wise – while the true wisdom that God has sent to confound the worldly wise – the Gospel – begins to seem foolish.

ERIC: Given its profound repercussions, this is one of the great sins of our time and is worth considering in more detail. Let's look at the entire passage in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians that describes this great dichotomy:

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. **1 Corinthians 1:18-27**

These verses describe three kinds of people: Jews, Greeks (or Gentiles) and Christians. To break this down and apply it to our world today, we're looking at the religiously observant; people who outwardly honor God, but whose traditions cause them to reject the message of the cross as a stumbling block. And then we have the Gentile secularists, those whose epistemology – their theory of knowledge and truth – is rooted firmly in human reasoning and its interaction with the material world. For them the notion of original sin, eternal judgment, and propitiation through a naked, bruised Messiah nailed to a tree – not to mention a dead man coming back to life – is the height of superstitious nonsense. And then there are the redeemed, those who by the grace of God embrace the message of the cross as the very glory and saving power of God.

But here's the rub. When the salt and light in a once Christianized culture declines in saltiness and wattage, bloodless religion and vain, man-made philosophies increase – the Jewish and Greek perspectives Paul noted in 1 Corinthians. Gradually, all but the most on-fire Christians find themselves seduced to one degree or the other by the spirit of the age. Moral, philosophical and theological relativism mushrooms. The Gospel gets watered down. Sin no longer seems utterly sinful. Self-help solutions proliferate. And the need to radically pronounce the Gospel of the Kingdom tends to get lost and seem increasingly foolish amid all the all the sound, fury and fog of a culture at war with God.

Eric: And an important corollary to all of this? The decline in the belief in hell.

Larry: From my experience the vast majority of people think they're good people, that God accepts them just as they are and that hell, if it exists, is only for people like Hitler or Bernie Maddoff. That's bad enough. But what's worse is how many Christians implicitly believe the same thing. They don't seem to really believe that there are literally people all around them who just are one heartbeat away from the grave and a certain judgment that will end with them being cast into the lake of fire. Oh, they might believe it in some theoretical way, like they believe in angels. But it is obvious from the way they live their lives that the belief has little or no real bearing on them – which really means from a biblical perspective that they don't believe it at all.

Once human depravity, sin, repentance, and salvation in Christ alone is watered down – and the love and mercy of God is emphasized to the exclusion of His holiness – the fear of God is progressively lost...as well, of course, the ultimate focus of that healthy, holy fear.

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. **Matthew 10:28**

ERIC And so for many if not most Christians the urgency for warning people to flee this "wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10) just dissolves away. The passion and perseverance that drives the believer to take the Gospel to the streets is lost.

As for the unbeliever?

The loss of the fear of God has led to a most extraordinary thing: a growing number of people who shamelessly and very publicly identify themselves with hell, Satan, demons, sin, and a virulent antichrist spirit. (Play) That our culture has become so dark and demonic that this level of depravity dares to show its face in public is one of the church's greatest badges of shame.

Ray, Tony or someone "We shouldn't blame the meat when it rots and maggots emerge. The fault is with the salt. It's only when the light grows dim that the deeds that were once only done only in darkness thrive and become increasingly public."

Another cause for the decline in street preaching addresses one of the most common reservations many people have about it: that it intrudes on the privacy of the individual. Much of what lies behind this objection is what we can call *the cult of individualization*: the unbiblical idea that all men are islands and have a sacred right to believe and do with their island whatever they want. And this is particularly true in America where the pioneering spirit and can-do, pull-yourself-up-by-the-boot-straps pragmatism has only added fuel to this cult.

Robert Shearer: Yes, the individual is important. Yes, personal freedom should always be upheld against the humanistic tendency to centralize control within the state or even the earthly church. But the simple fact remains that humans are hard-wired by their Creator to also fit within a collective – whether it be the city of God or the city of man; the Bride or the harlot, the New Jerusalem or the tower of Babel. And for that very reason, no man's righteousness or their sin is a completely private matter but rather ripples out into the larger culture and brings either blessing or curse.

ERIC: A contributing factor to the cult of individualization? Believe it or not: technology. The unintended consequences of technology are one of the most overlooked aspects of our modern world. For example, most people today view the idea of teenagers going out on dates by themselves, without parental supervision, as being as normal as baseball in the spring and football in the fall. But the fact is that this practice – a profoundly unbiblical one by the way – was almost unheard of until...the invention of the automobile. In the same way, climate-controlled offices, cars and homes – which have all but eliminated the existence of or at least the use of front porches – the explosion of suburbs, televisions, and personal entertainment devices, among many other things, have so fed the notion that each person is an island unto themselves that the very idea of standing on a street corner

or in front of a courthouse and confronting people with the truth upon which their very lives and eternal destinies hang seems as anachronistic as trying to tell the time with a sundial.

The solution to all these modern obstacles? As the great 8th century Celtic evangel Boniface – one of the greatest street preachers of all time – declared:

Let us stand fast in what is right and prepare our souls for trial. Let us neither be dogs that do not bark nor silent onlookers, nor paid servants who run away before the wolf. Instead, where the battle rages, let us find ourselves. Run towards the roar of the lion! Run towards the roar of battle! That is where Christ's most glorious victories shall be won.

We must return to our first love, embrace the cross, repent of fear and intimidation before man-made methodologies and technologies. We must strengthen the things that remain and return to the first-works. There is no substitution for the simple, straight-up proclamation of the Gospel, shouting it from the housetops!