

We Should Have Listened!



B. Kirkland

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On March 31, 1860, Gipsy Smith was born in a gypsy tent. He was converted to Christ on November 17, 1876. He began preaching almost immediately after his conversion, traveling around the world preaching to crowds numbering in the hundreds of thousands. It is said that he never had a meeting without conversions.

In the Paris Opera House he had 150 conversions out of *"the cream of society."*

He preached a series of messages in Brooklyn and between 300 and 400 people trusted Christ as their Saviour. In a meeting in New York, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller was present. He preached a message on *"Repentance."* He said, *"I only remembered that they were sinners needing a Saviour."*

Gipsy Smith said, "I didn't go through your colleges and seminaries. They wouldn't have me...but I have been to the feet of Jesus where the only true scholarship is learned." God used Gipsy Smith to win multiple thousands of people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He died on the Queen Mary on August 4, 1947, during his forty-fifth crossing of the Atlantic.



We Should Have Listened To Gipsy Smith

Over 100 years ago, Gipsy Smith warned about a new philosophy of ministry that was beginning to change our approach to winning people to Christ.

He said, *"I am afraid that in our zeal to get people into the kingdom or the church we have lowered the standard. I am afraid that in our zeal to get people into what we call the church, we have been more anxious about heads than hearts. In order to capture, we have compromised and lost. We have been more concerned about filling our church registers than we have about the kingdom."*

We have developed a slick sales approach to witnessing to the lost. We offer an incentive. We say, *“Would you like to know that you will go to Heaven when you die?”* Jesus never offered an incentive salvation.

In **Matthew 8:19,20** we read, *“And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.”* Jesus didn’t say, *“Great, just pray a little forgiveness prayer and join the group.”* His response to the man was, *“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”* We read no more about the man who said he would follow Him wherever He went.

“Me First?”

In **Luke 9:59** Christ asked another man if he would like to follow Him. His response was *“Lord, suffer **me first** to go and bury my father.”* In verse sixty-one we read, *“And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let **me first** go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.”* Christ answered they were not *“...fit for the kingdom of God”* (Verse 62). Jesus said, *“If any man will be My disciple, let him take up his cross and **deny himself.**”* Christ had just previously said in Luke 5:32, *“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* The Word of God says, *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation”* (Second Corinthians 7:10).

Gipsy Smith said, *“Christ never made it easy; and the man who makes it easy to be a Christian preaches a mongrel gospel.”* He said repentance is *“...the first step...the man who misses repentance will miss everything. Jesus Himself said, There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.”*

Gipsy Smith won thousands to the Lord under the power of the Holy Spirit. He did not use a slick no repentance sales pitch that says just pray a prayer. We should have listened to his warning. How quick we are to warn Catholics that just praying a prayer won’t save anyone and yet we think it will save us Baptists.

We Should Have Listened To A.W. Tozer

In more recent years God sent a man by the name of A.W. Tozer to give us another warning. We ignored him also. Tozer said, **“The crowds-at-any-price mania has taken a firm grip on Christianity** and is the motivating power back of a shockingly high percentage of all religious activity. Men and churches compete for the attention of the paying multitudes who are brought in by means of any currently popular gadget or gimmick ostensibly to have their souls saved; but, if the truth were told, often for reasons not so praiseworthy as this.



Our constant effort should be to reach as many persons as possible with the Christian message, and for that reason numbers are critically important. But our first responsibility is not to make converts but to uphold the honor of God in a world given over to the glory of fallen man. No matter how many persons we touch with the gospel we have failed unless, along with the message of invitation, we have boldly declared the exceeding sinfulness of man and the transcendent holiness of the Most High God. They who degrade or compromise the truth in order to reach larger numbers, dishonor God and deeply injure the souls of men. The temptation to modify the teachings of Christ with the hope that larger numbers may 'accept' Him is cruelly strong in this day of speed, size, noise, and crowds. But if we know what is good for us, we'll resist it with every power at our command. 'Lord, deliver me from this temptation. Give me a deep, unshakable commitment 'to uphold the honor of God in a world given over to the glory of fallen men'--whether I achieve crowds and success or not.'

In our eagerness to make converts I am afraid we have lately been guilty of using the technique of modern salesmanship, which is of course to present only the desirable qualities in a product and ignore the rest. We go to men and offer them a cozy home on the sunny side of the brae. If they will but accept Christ He will give them peace of mind, solve their problems, prosper their business, protect their families and keep them happy all day long. They believe us and come, and the first cold wind sends them shivering to some counselor to find out what has gone wrong; and that is the last we hear of many of them. By offering our hearers a sweetness-and-light gospel and promising every taker a place on the sunny side of the brae, we not only cruelly deceive them, we guarantee also a high casualty rate among the converts won on such terms.

Christianity today is man-centered, not God-centered. God is made to wait patiently, even respectfully, on the whims of men. The image of God currently popular is that of a distracted Father, struggling in heartbroken desperation to get people to accept a Saviour of whom they feel no need and in whom they have very little interest. To persuade these self-sufficient souls to respond to His generous offers, God will do almost anything, even using salesmanship methods and talking down to them in the chummiest way imaginable. This view of things is, of course, a kind of religious romanticism, which while it often uses flattering and sometimes embarrassing terms in praise of God, manages nevertheless to make man the star of the show."

- A.W. Tozer

WE SHOULD HAVE LISTENED!

We should have listened to Jesus, “*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Matthew 4:17).

We should have listened to John the Baptist, “*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*” (Matthew 3:1,2, 7, 8).

We should have listened to Peter, “*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (Second Peter 3:9).

We should have listened to Paul, “*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent*” (Acts 17:29-30).

We should have listened to hundreds of sermons and books written by Godly preachers during past centuries that stood for **repentance** as taught in the Word of God.

BIBLE PREACHERS

Acts 5:42, *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.* **It was all about Christ. It was not about people going to Heaven.**

Peter, In Acts chapter two, we have a record of Peter’s message. About half of his message was quotations from the Word of God. He quoted about twenty-five Bible verses and focused his message on Christ.

No Slick Sales Promotion

Referring to Christ, Peter preached the truth saying, “*...ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain...*” Peter did not suggest they pray a little forgiveness prayer, He said, “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you...*”

Stephen, In Acts chapter seven, Stephen also used the Scriptures to teach the truth concerning Jesus. Under the control of the Holy Spirit (verse 55) he said...

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.”

People Made Decisions

After Peter preached, many people made a positive choice. After Stephen preached, we read...

“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth... Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him” (Act 7:58).

- (1) **Salvation messages in the Bible** focus on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; today the focus is on people going to Heaven.
- (2) **Salvation messages in the Bible** demand repentance; today no demands are made. The new modern plan is to just say a prayer.
- (3) **Salvation messages in the Bible** are filled with Scripture that resulted in conviction about offending God. Today the focus is on people praying a prayer and getting to Heaven.

They Did Not Focus On Attracting A Large Crowd

John Preached, *“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:33).* John did draw a crowd; however, we read they... *“beheaded John in the prison” (Matthew 14:10).*

Jesus Preached,

- *“Thou hypocrite” (Matthew 7:5).*
- *“...you hypocrites” (Mark 7:6).*
- *“Ye are of your father the devil” (John 8:44).*
- *“Woe unto you...hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27).*

Jesus also drew a crowd and we read,

- *“...the Jews sought the more to kill him” (John 5:18).*
- *“...the Jews sought to kill him” (John 7:1).*
- *“...they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him” (Luke 23:21).*

Peter and John Preached,

- *“And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison” (Act 5:18).*

James Preached,

- *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses” (James 4:4).*

Paul Preached,

- *“We preach, warning every man” (Colossians 1:28).* *“And thinkest thou...that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” (Romans 2:3).*

Paul's focus was on the truth, not crowds.

When the Christian people were worldly he said, *“I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal”* (First Corinthians 3:1).

To immodest women he commanded, *“...that women adorn themselves in modest apparel”* (First Timothy 2:9)

To immature Christians he said, *“grow up.”* (Ephesians 4:15)

He spoke to the Colossian Christians concerning, *“fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry”* (Colossians 3:5).

Over a dozen times Paul warned Christians about their *“lusts.”*

Paul said they were *“lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof”* (Second Timothy 3:2-5).

Paul said... *“Are ye so foolish?”* (Galatians 3:3).

The reaction to his preaching?

- *“...took counsel to kill him”* (Act 9:23).
- *“...watched...day and night to kill him”* (Act 9:24).
- *“...went about to slay him”* (Act 9:29).
- *“...put him in prison”* (Act 12:4).
- *“...cast them into prison”* (Act 16:23).
- *“...went about to kill him”* (Act 21:31).
- *“...ready to kill him”* (Act 23:15).
- *“...wait in the way to kill him”* (Act 25:3).

Paul Declared “All The Counsel of God”

Paul could honestly say, *“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27). The word *“shunned”* (*hypostello*) is used in three other places in the New Testament.

- **In Act 20:20 Paul said,** *“I kept back nothing.”*
- **In Hebrews 10:38 Paul said,** *“...if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”*

In Galatians 2:12,13 Paul said...

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.”

Peter Feared The Outcome of Preaching The Truth

The word “separated” here means “to mark off by boundaries.” The pastor who sets boundaries on his preaching for fear people won’t come or others might leave should get out of the ministry and get an honest job. Paul publicly exposed Peter for his cowardice. In **Galatians 2:14** Paul said, “*But when I saw that they (Peter and Barnabas) walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel,” we read Paul rebuked him (Peter - the leader) *before them all.*”*

Paul Warned Preachers

As preachers, we are often guilty of preaching to our people what God is really preaching to us.

- **Acts 20:17** tells us Paul, “...called the elders (pastors) of the church.”
- **It was to the pastor he said,** “*I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you*” (v.20).
- **To the pastors he said,** “*I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*”
- **To the pastors he said,** “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*” (v.28).
- **He concluded,** “*Therefore watch, and remember...*” (v.31)...“*I have shewed you all things*” (v.35).

Who Hindered You?

Paul began his address to these Christians saying, “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you...*” Paul rebuked them saying, “*Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?*” (Galatians 5:7). He said, “*I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain*” (Ch.4:11). This kind of preaching is never popular. He said, “*Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*” (v.16).

Paul started and ended the same. In verse twelve he said, “*I would they were even cut off which trouble you.*” As he drew near the end of his ministry he said, “*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers...*” (Philippians 3:2).

Earlier in his ministry he said, *“I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27). At the end he said, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* (Second Timothy 4:7).

Focusing On Crowds, We Tend To Compromise

When garbage music first raised its’ ugly head, pastors rose up in a anger and preached against it. Many pastors have changed, justifying their acceptance of what they once stood against because they are wanting to reach people.

There was a time when pastors would **refuse** to let women have a position in the church who dressed immodestly. Now we hear preachers say, **“we ask”** our women to dress modestly. (That’s like a Sergeant asking his soldiers to wear a uniform)

There was a time when fundamental independent Baptist pastors said, **“Thus saith the Lord!”** (That phrase is in the Bible in 430 verses) **If the Lord says it, preach it with the authority God has trusted you with.**

Two Things Are Taught In This Verse.

1. The Greek word *“truth”* here is *alētheuo* and is only found in one other place in the Bible. Paul asked, *“Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?”* (Galatians 4:16). It refers to preaching the truth very plain rather than shadowy. It speaks of truth explained so plainly that none have to guess concerning the meaning of what is being *commanded* by God.
2. The word love here is *agape* and refers to a divine love and deep compassion for Christ and for the people God has entrusted us to teach. **Ephesians 5:25** says, *“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”* That is our mandate as pastors.

One of the greatest mistakes we can make as pastors is to love a crowd more than we love *individuals*. To compromise the truth to reach a crowd is not truth as taught in Ephesians 4:15. To compromise the truth while claiming we love Christ, or our people is a contradiction of terms. We are to be *“speaking the truth in love.”*

God’s Preachers Didn’t Ask, They Commanded

- **First Timothy 4:11**, *“These things command...”*
- **First Timothy 6:14**, *“...keep this commandment...”*
- **Second Thessalonians 3:4**, *“...we command you.”*

- **First Thessalonians 4:11**, “...as we commanded you.”
- **First Thessalonians 6:14**, “...keep this commandment...”
- **Second Thessalonians 3:6**, “Now we command you...”
- **Second Thessalonians 3:10**, “...this we commanded you...”
- **Second Thessalonians 3:12**, “...we command and exhort...”
- **First Corinthians 7:10**, “I command, yet not I, but the Lord...”
- **Act 16:18**, “I command thee in the name of Jesus...”

God Commands Us To Command

First Timothy 1:3 says, “I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge (command) some that they teach no other doctrine.”

He did not say **ask them**. The command was to “**charge them**.”

First Timothy 4:11, “These things command (*paraggellō*) and teach.” The same Greek word is translated “charge” in the following verses.

- **First Timothy 1:18**, “This charge I commit unto thee...”
- **First Timothy 5:7**, “And these things give in charge.”
- **First Timothy 5:21**, “I charge thee before God.”
- **First Timothy 6:13**, “I give thee charge in the sight of God.”
- **First Timothy 6:17**, “Charge them...”

God Doesn't Say Please!

- **Exodus 7:2**, “Thou shalt speak all that I command thee...”
- **Exodus 27:20**, “And thou shalt command the children of Israel...”
- **Leviticus 13:54**, “Then the priest shall command...”
- **Leviticus 14:4**, “Then shall the priest command...”
- **Leviticus 14:5**, “And the priest shall command...”
- **Leviticus 14:36**, “Then the priest shall command...”
- **Leviticus 14:40**, “Then the priest shall command...”
- **Leviticus 24:2**, “Command the children of Israel...”
- **Numbers 5:2**, “Command the children of Israel...”
- **Numbers 9:8**, “I will hear what the LORD will command...”
- **Numbers 28:2**, “Command the children of Israel...”
- **Numbers 34:2**, “Command the children of Israel...”
- **Numbers 35:2**, “Command the children of Israel...”

God Did Not Write The Ten Suggestions

There are over 700 verses with the words “command,” “commanded,” “commandeth,” in the Word of God.

God's Preachers Didn't Say Please

- First Timothy 4:11, *"These things command..."*
- First Timothy 6:14, *"...keep this commandment..."*
- First Thessalonians 4:11, *"...as we commanded you..."*
- First Thessalonians 6:14, *"...keep this commandment..."*
- Second Thessalonians 3:6, *"Now we command you..."*
- Second Thessalonians 3:10, *"...this we commanded you..."*
- Second Thessalonians 3:12, *"...we command and exhort..."*
- First Corinthians 7:10, *"I command, yet not I, but the Lord..."*
- Act 16:18, *"I command thee in the name of Jesus..."*
- Second Thessalonians 3:4, *"...do the things which we command you..."*

God Doesn't Ask - He Commands

- Act 17:30, *"...God...commandeth all men..."*
- Act 10:33, *"...hear all things that are commanded thee of God."*
- Act 10:42, *"...He commanded us to preach..."*
- Act 1:4, *"...commanded them..."*
- John 15:14, *"...I command you."*
- John 15:17, *"...I command you."*
- Matthew 15:4, *"God commanded, saying..."*
- Second Corinthians 4:6, *"God, who commanded..."*

God commands or charges us to obey His Word over 100 times in the New Testament. He makes no suggestions, nor does He "ask" us to follow His will. We simply obey or face the consequences. To His pastors, God says, *"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority..."* (Titus 2:15).

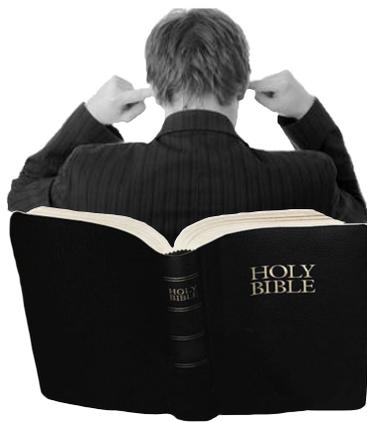
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"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (First Peter 4:17).



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