

# The Preaching of the Gospel: Free Offer or Effectual Power

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In the church world today, it is almost universally accepted that the preaching of the gospel must include a free offer of salvation. In our preceding article we refuted some of the “proofs” advanced by the advocates of a well-meaning offer of salvation. What a terrible thing it is when beautiful passages such as Isaiah 45:22 and Ezekiel 33:11 are perverted, destroyed and robbed of all their power and beauty, of all their comfort for the weary and heavy laden pilgrim of God in the midst of the world! We now continue with our discussion of the passages advanced by the exponents of a general, free offer of grace and salvation. The more such texts are studied, the more evident it will become that the preaching is not an OFFER, but an ANNOUNCEMENT of the finished work of salvation by which God saves His people effectually.

One passage often quoted by Arminian advocates of the free offer is I Timothy 2:3-4, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” Also in this passage the utter impotency of this Arminian position is fully revealed. Mind you, God will have all men to be saved. Fact is, however, all men (everybody, head for head) are not saved. So, the Lord does not attain unto the fulfillment of His will and desire. All the Lord can do is to stand idly by, waiting for the sinner’s response, and there is nothing He can do about it. What a wicked caricature of the Almighty God!

Now what is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour? The words of verse 3 refer to what precedes in verses 1 and 2. Supplication, etc., must be made for all men. And the apostle is speaking here of kings and all that are in authority. And why must these supplications and prayers be made for all men? Because God will have all men to be saved. However, does the expression “all men” refer to everybody, head for head? They who advocate a free, well-meaning offer of salvation assert this. But is this true? Does this necessarily follow? Of course not! When Romans 5:18 says that by the righteousness of one the free gift came unto ALL MEN unto justification of life, does the expression “all men” in this text refer to everybody? This is impossible. Fact is, this free gift did not come upon everybody unto justification of life. Everybody simply did not and does not receive it. So, the expression “all men” most often refers in Scripture to everybody as belonging to a certain class. Prayers and supplications must also be made for kings and for all in authority.

Does this refer to everyone in authority? Indeed not! But, in our prayers and supplications we must not exclude this certain class of men. For God would have all men to be saved. He would save out of all classes of men. Did not Calvin write that if God would have everybody be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, why, then, did He not “see to it” that the gospel be preached to everybody and that everybody be provided with the knowledge of the truth?

Another passage which the Arminian loves to quote is I Timothy 4:10, “For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.” How strangely the Arminian exponents of a universal love of God explain this Scripture! That God is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe, must be understood (say they) in the sense that God wants to save all men, everybody, but that He actually saves those who believe. He loves everybody, extends to all the hearers of the gospel the offer of salvation, but saves only those who believe and because they believe.

How contrary this is to the Word of God! We are not saved because we believe. We are saved by grace and through faith (Ephesians 2:8). And this salvation by grace and through faith is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast. We are saved, not because of faith, but through faith, God’s sovereign gift to His own elect.

Besides, these Arminian expositors violate this text. We do not read that God would be the Saviour of all men, but that He is the Saviour of all men. And when the apostle adds, “especially of those who believe”, that is to say, particularly those who believe, then He designates how He saves those “all men.” The Lord saves all men, out of all the classes of men, by faith. God can save His own only through faith. He does not save a sinner in any other

way. The Lord saves His people as God. Faith is the bond uniting us with Christ. To believe means that we look away from ourselves, confess ourselves absolutely hopelessly lost, place all our trust in the Christ of Calvary. God saves us as God only can save, working in us the knowledge of our utter “undone-ness” and that all salvation is of God alone. We repeat: God, as God cannot save us in any other way.

Besides, we read here in I Timothy 4:10 that we trust in the living God. God is the living God! What a miserable caricature the Arminian advocate of a free offer presents to us of the living God! God saves His own, sovereignly and irresistibly, especially, particularly through faith, that no man may boast, but that, glorying, we may glory in the Lord, the alone living God. To God alone be all the glory, now and forever.

A third passage to which we would call attention is II Corinthians 5:18-20, “And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” We cannot and need not discuss this wonderful passage in detail in this brief article. The Arminians call attention to the fact that we read here that God reconciled the world unto Himself, and also that He pleads with the sinner to be reconciled to God.

Now we must understand that reconciliation is a legal term. It refers to our legal relation to the law. In our relation to the law we are either guilty or innocent. Reconciliation refers to that change in our legal status, our relation to the law, whereby we, formerly guilty and worthy of everlasting damnation, are now judged to be righteous and worthy of everlasting life and glory. We read in this passage that God reconciled the world unto Himself. Of course, if the word “world” here refers to all mankind, head for head, that all mankind must be saved, in as much as everybody is reconciled, is now judged by the Judge of all the earth to be free of all guilt and entitled to everlasting life and glory. This, however, is obviously not true. Further, it is very clear from the Word of God that the word “world” does not have the same connotation wherever it appears in Holy Writ. We ask the reader to look up the following passages: Romans 4:13 with I John 2:15-17, John 3:16 with John 17:9, John 3:16 with John 6:37-39. We also call attention to John 12:39-40 and Luke 2:34. The world here in II Corinthians 5:18-20 is surely the world that has been reconciled.

But consider the following. First, we read that all things are of God. Mind you, all things are of God, the living God! Again we say: what a caricature the Arminian presents to us of the living God Who would have men to be saved, reconciles the whole world unto Himself, and then must content Himself with the salvation of merely a few. But this is not all. We read in verse 20: “Be ye reconciled to God.” Notice, please, that the apostle does not write: “Become ye reconciled to God.” This would be in direct conflict with the text. We need not BECOME reconciled to God. Fact is, we ARE reconciled to God. God, we read, has reconciled us unto Himself. This reconciliation is accomplished fact. It has occurred. But we do read: “Be ye reconciled.” A couple having marital difficulties seeks and obtains help from a marriage counselor who settles their difficulties and brings them together again. And now, having reconciled them, he urges them: Be ye reconciled; ye are reconciled, and now walk as such. This is what we read here in II Corinthians 5:20. The church of God has been reconciled to God. And now we are exhorted by the apostle to walk as reconciled, not to become reconciled but to be reconciled, that is, to walk as such in all our walk and conversation.

In addition, notice that the very form is not that of an offer. It is rather the command of the gospel - “Be ye reconciled to God.” It is this command, powerfully applied to the hearts of the elect hearers, which God uses to save His people. The preaching, therefore, is not an offer, but an effectual power unto salvation.