

Persuasion or Resurrection? What Is the Sinner's Need?

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Introduction

If you ask me, I will tell you with conviction that a believer should eat healthful food and exercise regularly in order to enjoy, everything else being equal, a long, healthy life of service for the Lord. If you watch me, though, you may see me eating an excess of snacks and desserts, drinking coffee and sweet tea, and generally behaving in terms of my diet as though the rapture is certainly to occur this week. It might occur to you, by watching my methodology, that you know what I *really* believe.

Methods are like that. They demonstrate our real philosophical commitments.

God brought extraordinary revival to the American colonies in the 1740s, the Great Awakening. The principal preachers of that revival shared a common evangelical Calvinism: Theodore Jacob Frelinghuysen, George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, and Jonathan Edwards.

After the revival fires had died down and Edwards had taken a pastorate in Indian country in the far west of Massachusetts, he settled down to explain how his evangelical Calvinism could hold to total inability and yet energetically pursue revival. Edwards explained that sinners do not have natural inability to do right, because they are created in God's image. But morally they are unable to do right. It is true that they cannot do right; but their *cannot* is a result of their *will not*. The methodologies of the Great Awakening preachers were shaped by this view of human nature.

Let us fast-forward to the early 19th century, three generations after Edwards. The two most significant evangelists of the first half of the 19th century labored in Edwards' shadow and had to come to grips with his conclusions about revival. They were Asahel Nettleton, who was active as an itinerant evangelist between 1811 and 1822, and Charles G. Finney, who served as an evangelist from 1824 until 1835, and then off and on with other duties as a pastor and professor until his death in 1875. Both men knew Edwards' writings and consciously responded to them. Their reactions to Edwards' theology are vastly different, however.

Nettleton embraced Edwards' views, which he regarded as biblical, and shaped his evangelistic methodologies accordingly. Finney rejected Edwards' views, which he regarded as unbiblical (and logically incoherent), and shaped his evangelistic methods to express his contrary commitments. Finney's methods, in particular, have been extraordinarily influential in American evangelicalism. But methods express underlying commitments.

The purpose of this essay is to display the evangelistic methods of these two famous evangelists, both of whom carefully crafted them to reflect their theologies, so that we will be challenged to make a conscious connection between *how* we present the gospel and *what* we really believe about the gospel.

I. Nettleton

A. Biographical Background

1. Nettleton was born in North Killingworth, CT, on April 21, 1783. Although his parents were unbelievers, they had Nettleton baptized as a baby, allowed him and his five siblings to attend the parish church, and were generally moral people.
2. Nettleton was not a strong student and gave few signs of later eminence.
3. At age 17 he came under severe conviction that he was answerable to God, and he decided to amend his life and become a better person. He began reading the Bible and trying to influence his friends to turn from their wicked ways. He got their attention when he refused to enter into a venture with them in starting a dancing school.
4. He read Edwards' *A Faithful Narrative* and the *Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, but he continued to feel inward misery that he was not right with God. His frustration turned to anger against God and doubt that he would ever be saved. He became convinced of his own depravity and God's sovereignty, but he disliked both doctrines and sought to refute them.
5. He continued in this battle for many months, finally experiencing a severe bout of conviction that lasted for several hours, culminating in a strange state of complete peace. Unsure how to interpret it, he thought at first God had abandoned him. But examining the Scriptures and the lives of others whom he believed were genuine Christians, he came to the conclusion that God had saved him.
6. Nettleton's conversion was part of a revival in Killingworth that was part of the wider phenomenon known as the Second Great Awakening. Nearly 100 people in Killingworth came to Christ over about a three-year period between 1801 and 1804. Nettleton's experience was in 1801 towards the beginning of the revival.
7. Disease ravaged Killingworth during this time, and both Nettleton's brother and father passed away. Asahel settled in to being a farmer but wished he could serve as a missionary: "If I might be the means of saving one soul, I should prefer it to all the riches and honours of this world" (Nelson, 23).
8. Studying with his pastor at night while tending the farm, Nettleton prepared for college and was able to enter Yale in 1805. Although not academically stellar, he was a godly, mature presence on campus, and students tended to come to him for spiritual advice.
9. In the spring of 1808, he "had what would be called today a nervous breakdown" (24). President Dwight loaned him a copy of Edwards' *Religious Affections*, and the Lord used that book to bring peace to Nettleton's heart.

10. He graduated in 1810 and received licensing to preach a year later. He finally received ordination in the Congregational Church in 1817.

A. Evangelistic Ministry

1. In the meantime, however, he declined opportunities to take a settled pastorate and set out on a career in itinerant evangelism, a very rare career choice at the time.
2. Nettleton had imbibed the theology of Timothy Dwight, which, in most important respects, was the evangelical Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards. Like Edwards, he distinguished moral incapacity, which all men have because of the Fall, with natural ability, which all men have by virtue of their creation in God's image.
3. Indeed, Nettleton sounds just like Edwards in one of his sermons which is summarized in the following quote from Nelson's dissertation on Nettleton and Finney:

The sinner is culpable because he possesses all the components of moral agency ('reason, judgment, memory, will and affections'), and is able to decide for Christ: 'A choice must and shall be made. Man is a moral agent, destined to act for eternity.' The only obstacle to his salvation is his obstinate will. The 'real difficulty' is that 'the sinner will not do what he can' (Nelson, 66).

4. As an evangelist, therefore, Nettleton thought it imperative to get to know people in order to minister to them. He would move into a community and assist the pastor (or, if the church had no pastor, the leadership) for weeks or even months before announcing that he was holding meetings. In this way he was viewed as an arm of the local ministry rather than as an alternative or threat to it. He knew that James Davenport, during the Great Awakening, had split churches with his theatrics and his criticisms of local pastors, and he was determined to never have that effect.
5. Nettleton employed four primary methods of evangelism:
 - a. He was an intense, searching preacher, who exhibited the law of God to terrify sinners and offered the forgiveness of the gospel. He made direct appeals to sinners to repent. "In many of them [his sermons] he scarcely sounds like the Calvinist he was reputed to be" (74; quoting Thornbury, *God Sent Revival*, 108). He himself said, "The preacher should make the same appeals to the sinner that Scripture makes and let the good and sovereign God save those he chooses" (74-75, footnote 150).
 - b. Nettleton made much of follow-up. He spent time in his converts' homes, doing personal counseling and engaging in spiritual conversation. "Probably no itinerant since Paul himself maintained closer contact—through extensive correspondence, return visits, and intercessory prayer—with those who had professed Christ under ministry" (78; quoting Evans, MA Thesis, 38). He believed that regeneration is

instantaneous, but the assurance that comes both to a new convert and to the community of which the new convert is a part is a process that involves discipleship and growth in knowledge and obedience.

- c. Nettleton emphasized prayer in his meetings. He himself prayed and he called on the believers to pray for revival fires to fall. But he also followed Edwards in arguing that a spirit of prayerfulness is evidence that God is on the move. Nelson says, “Nettleton held that the normal pattern for revival was a moving of God in the hearts of the church which causes them to pray and work for the conversion of the lost” (*Sermons*, 389). This same sentiment was expressed later by Spurgeon:

My brethren, prayer is an essential part of the providence of God; so essential, that you will always find that when God delivers his people, his people have been praying for that deliverance. They tell us that prayer does not affect the Most High, and cannot alter his purposes. We never thought it did; but prayer is a part of the purpose and plan, and a most effective wheel in the machinery of providence. The Lord sets his people praying, and then he blesses them.

- d. Finally, Nettleton held private inquiry meetings for those in the community who felt conviction. He did not include in his services direct invitations to respond to the preaching. He feared reactions rooted in emotion or tied to his persuasive powers rather than the work of the Spirit (“If regeneration comes from persuasion, ‘then a man begets himself, he is born of himself, he makes himself to differ from others. On this plan the Spirit of God has no more to do than Paul or Apollos’” [54]). However, he was urgent in pressing on sinners the demands of God’s law and the hope held out in the gospel. Nettleton’s modern biography, Thornbury, speaks of these inquiry rooms as spiritual clinics. Nettleton used the scalpel of the law and the medicine of the gospel to lead sinners to spiritual health.

1. He also avoided certain things as counterproductive:

- a. He preached usually three or four times a week. He was concerned that successive meetings over a long period of time might create physical exhaustion and lead to emotional excess and counterfeit decisions. Nelson writes,

In an early revival at Milton, Connecticut, a service was disturbed when some anxious sinners were overwhelmed by the realization of their lostness. Nettleton asked that they be removed to another place where they could be counseled privately. He informed the congregation the emotionalism they had witnessed was not evidence of religion, but rather of lack of religion. The disruptive persons had just realized they were lost. Tyler notes that such an agitated reaction to conviction of sin was somewhat common in Nettleton’s meetings and usually ended with the persons involved finding peace in Christ (86-87).

- b. He avoided giving sinners the impression that their destiny ultimately depended on them. He believed that the essence of saving repentant faith was the recognition that God is God, that He is righteous, and that the sinner is totally depraved and helpless. He wished to send no signals that the sinner had power to change his own situation or that God did not have power to change the sinner. In general, he used the means at his disposal to, in Nelson's words, "create an environment where God confronts man." Of course, as Edwards taught, God may not choose to come down (the Spirit blows wherever He pleases), but God often pours out blessings where He is being given all the credit for the results.
1. Nettleton saw amazing results during his itinerant ministry between 1811 and 1822. Thousands were "hopefully converted" and added to the New England churches. In October of 1822, he was stricken with typhus fever. For two years he could not preach at all, and he would never again be the same. By the time he again began preaching, a new force had emerged with a very different message: Charles Grandison Finney.

I. Finney

A. Biographical Background

1. Finney was born in Warren, CT, on August 29, 1792. This was northwestern Connecticut, about 70 miles NW of where Nettleton had been born 9 years earlier.
2. Like Nettleton's parents, Finney's parents were not believers, but unlike the Nettletons, the Finneys were irreligious and gave Charles very little exposure to the Bible or organized religion.
3. Finney moved to Adams, New York, 250 miles to the Northwest, in 1821, when he was 29 years old. He had done some school teaching and was seeking to be a lawyer. He settled in to First Presbyterian Church with Pastor George Gale shortly after his arrival, believing that church attendance would be an important part of making himself part of the community.
4. Two key things happened under Gale's ministry.
 - a. First, Finney professed faith in Christ for salvation.
 - (1) Finney came under deep conviction of his sin and need for religious instruction. He purchased a Bible and studied it constantly. Nelson records the crisis that occurred in Finney's life several months after moving to Adams:

On Wednesday morning, 10 October, Finney rose early and started to his office. As he walked, he heard a voice within asking these haunting questions:

What are you waiting for? Did you not promise to give your heart to God? And what are you trying to do? Are you endeavoring to work out a righteousness of your own?

Instantaneously, he understood that Jesus had done all that work needed to save him. He simply needed to place his trust in Christ and accept the offer of salvation. Everything had been completed except Finney's 'consent to give up my sins, and give myself to Christ.' Coming to himself, Finney realized he was standing in the street and did not know how long he had been there. The inner voice again pressed, asking: 'Will you accept it now, to-day?' Finney replied, 'Yes, I will accept it to-day, or I will die in the attempt'" (Nelson, 100-101).

- (2) He went out of town into a grove of trees and wrestled with God. Struggling with his pride (he feared someone would happen upon him and find him praying), he came to the conclusion that "volition, not intellectual assent, [is] the true nature of faith. Faith 'was to place oneself under the mercy of a supremely forgiving heavenly Father'" (Nelson, quoting Finney's *Memoirs*).
- (3) He also immediately felt called to preach and returned to his law office, where he prayed fervently and had an exceptional experience of the presence of God. In his words,

I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. . . . the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, . . . like a wave of electricity, . . . it seemed to come in waves, and waves of liquid love (*Memoirs*, 23-24; quoted in Nelson, 103).

- (4) He resigned his law practice and gave himself to full-time evangelism. Under the tutelage of Pastor Gale, Finney received licensing to preach two years later, in 1823.
 - a. The second thing that happened to Finney under Gale, then, is rather surprising. He utterly and completely rejected the Westminster Calvinism of the Presbyterian Church to which he belonged.
 - (1) Fortunately for Finney, the Presbytery of St. Lawrence had a number of men who were "loose with their Calvinism," and they ordained him as an evangelist on July 1, 1824.
 - (2) Finney found Edwards' distinction between natural ability and moral inability incomprehensible. From the beginning he seems to have believed what he wrote later in his *Systematic Theology*: "That man cannot be under a moral obligation to perform an absolute impossibility, is a first truth of reason."
 - (3) In other words, if the Bible commands a certain behavior, such as repenting, believing, loving God, being holy, etc., then man must be able to obey or he would be under no obligation to obey.

- (4) At his greatest revival meeting—Rochester in 1830—Finney expressed how he combined his legal training with his role as an evangelist: “A sinner, under the influence of the Spirit of God, is just as free as a jury under the argument of an advocate.”
- (5) The preacher’s job, then, is one of persuasion. He is the coworker of the Holy Spirit, who similarly is exerting His mighty power to persuade the sinner to repent and believe. Again, he stated later in his *Systematic Theology*: “The sinner has all the faculties and natural attributes requisite to render perfect obedience to God. All he needs is to be induced to use those powers and attributes as he ought.”

A. Finney’s Evangelistic Ministry

1. Without becoming sidetracked into a full examination of Finney’s theology, suffice it to say that he constructed a system that in every part was consistent with this fundamental notion of man’s perfect freedom.
2. However, because Finney spoke of the death of Christ as an atonement for man’s sins (he held to a governmental rather than substitutionary interpretation of that death), he spoke of repentance from sins (he laid special emphasis on repentance as an act of the human will to repudiate one’s old lifestyle), he spoke of faith in Christ’s death, in God, and in Scripture, and he spoke of holiness as the essential characteristic of the Christian life (eventually developing a robust doctrine of perfectionism), people were slow to realize how far his message was from that of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches of the Second Great Awakening.
3. What came to their notice were not his theological aberrations—which revealed themselves only over time—but his practical innovations.
4. When Lyman Beecher gathered a number of pastors with Finney at New Lebanon in 1827 to discuss Finney’s evangelism, the principal issue under scrutiny was Finney’s new methods. Nettleton seems to have instinctively realized that Finney’s methods implied a very different approach to the doctrine of salvation, but most of the pastors in the region only slowly came to see the connection.
5. What was Finney doing that was so different?
In his dissertation Hollon describes the fundamental standpoint of the New Measures:
 - a. “Conversion included emotions
 - b. “New measures were directed towards emotions
 - c. “Any measure was acceptable unless one could scripturally disprove it” (Hollon dissertation 121).
1. Nelson identifies measures that Finney adopted over the first decade of his evangelistic work:

- a. Aggressive, Dramatic, Extemporaneous Preaching. Finney did not use sensationalism because he believed the will had to be reached through both the emotions and the mind. He viewed preaching as persuasion, using argument, illustration, and passion to convince the hearers of the truth of the message.
- b. Personal Visitation in Homes. Finney organized “Holy Bands” to make visits to sinners between morning and evening services. He believed persuasion should be carried out at multiple levels, continually confronting the sinner with truth.
- c. Prayer as the Means of Securing God’s Power and Blessing. The preacher can do only so much. It is essential then to enlist the help of the Holy Spirit in the persuasion process.
- d. Anxious Seat to Allow Response to God. After introducing the method in Rutland, New York, in 1825, Finney returned to it in Rochester in 1830. After that, it became a standard part of his methodology. The anxious seat was a place set aside at the front of the building where sinners could come at the close of the service to receive individual attention. Methodist preachers had employed something of the kind for decades, so Finney did not invent the idea. He introduced it, however, into churches that had Puritan or Calvinistic traditions. Finney insisted that he always distinguished walking down an aisle from actual repentance and faith, and he believed the method was sound because it forced sinners to confront their pride. A public avowal of conviction might be the first step in turning the will from proud self-reliance to trust in Christ. Of course, critics like Nettleton attacked this methodology. They argued that it sent two messages: walking an aisle is repentance and faith—no physical activity should be confused with what is a spiritual transaction; more fundamentally, it “makes a strong theological statement that man’s will is totally free to respond to God” (Nelson, 178).
- e. Inquiry Meetings for Those Responding. Both Nettleton and Finney had also used inquiry meetings to help sinners more fully understand the gospel, so Finney was not criticized for these.
- f. Protracted Meetings for Cumulative Effect. Finney believed in the cumulative effect of meetings to break down resistance in the sinner’s will. He held meetings every night for weeks (as long as he felt the Spirit was working), and he would set aside three or four days periodically to have three meetings a day. Towns would virtually shut down and attend services nearly the entire day. He knew that the camp meetings had produced profound effects when people were placed in these intense contexts, and he believed it was profitable to replicate those.
- g. Immediate Church Membership for Those Converted. Since conversion is simply making the right choice and such a choice was made instantaneously, Finney could see no reason to delay a convert’s right to join the church. Citing the precedents in Acts, Finney criticized the Old School Calvinist delays of 6 months

or more. Interestingly, when Finney became a pastor, he himself instituted a one month delay.

1. When asked why he was doing all of these things, Finney's answer was simple: they work!

“Show me the *fruits* of your ministry; and if the fruits of your ministry so far exceed mine as to give me evidence that you have found out a more excellent way than I have, I will adopt your views. But do you expect me to abandon my own views and practices and adopt yours, when ... the *results* unspeakably surpass the results of yours?” (*Memoirs*, 83, quoted in Nelson, 105)

2. Finney critiqued Gale and his preaching, and his conclusion was that Gale's Calvinism and methods were both ineffective in winning souls. Therefore, they were false. His own views make good sense and God is blessing them to the conversion of thousands. Therefore, they are true.
3. Finney died 30 years before William James' famous lectures on pragmatism, but I daresay he would have learned but little. When he argued that church buildings should be well-lit and clean so that sinners would be more comfortable and likely to be undistracted, he was employing the same kind of common sense that my Bible teacher used forty years ago when he told us that invitation songs should be played fast so that people will be more likely to move out of their seats.

A. Contrasting Nettleton and Finney

1. Nelson perceptively contrasts the means Nettleton employed with the means utilized by Finney:

Nettleton sought, by stressing divine sovereignty, to point men to God alone for their salvation. Finney sought, by stressing human freedom, to urge men to receive the salvation offered by God (198).

2. One can see the difference, for instance, in how they each typically worked in an enquiry room. Nettleton would address the sinner's questions, reinforce the truth, and urge the person to repent and believe. He would then direct the person to a private place to pray and consider what he or she has heard.
3. Finney would press home the obligation of the sinner to repent and believe and not feel he was successful until the person prayed for salvation.

I. Some Conclusions

Some conclusions seem appropriate:

- A. One's theology will inevitably impact one's methodology. Furthermore, people draw conclusions from our methodology about what we believe before they may know the details of our theology.
1. D. L. Moody and the two generations of evangelists that crisscrossed America between 1875 and 1935 were, most of them, far more orthodox than Finney relative to forensic justification, original sin, eternal security, and other key doctrines. But they adopted the same basic stance as Finney relative to the roles of the preacher, the Spirit, and the sinner in conversion. Preachers persuade, the Spirit convicts, and sinners decide. It is not surprising, then, that they adopted almost all of Finney's methodologies and made them integral to the evangelistic enterprise in America.
 2. Studying Finney at the very least should cause us to query the theological underpinnings of our methods. What theology is suggested by what we do and how we do it?
- A. No matter one's theology, if he takes the Great Commission seriously, he is going to employ means in carrying out the task.
1. William Carey's reminder in 1792 that Christians must recognize their place in the divine plan to call out for himself a people for his name must never be forgotten. Nettleton urged immediate response just as strongly as Finney, and he could be just as passionate, illustrative, and threatening in his preaching.
 2. Iain Murray, in *Revivals and Revivalism*, argues that the Bible prescribes the basic means of all true evangelism: preaching and prayer. This is a salutary reminder and important to keep at the heart of our methodologies.
 3. Nevertheless, every time we preach or pray publicly, there are myriad decisions to be made about how we do so. Do we preach for 40 minutes or an hour and forty minutes? Do we read a manuscript or preach extemporaneously? What version of the Scriptures do we use? How many preliminaries to the service do we have, and how focused are they on the sermon topic for the day?
 4. These are all methodological questions, and Nettleton would have addressed them with sinners in mind just as surely as Finney would. We cannot be haphazard and slap-dash and then excuse ourselves because salvation is, after all, a sovereign affair unrelated to such human factors. God ordinarily works through means to bring sinners to himself, and we are links in that chain of providence. We must take our task very seriously.
 5. Paul certainly did. Here his words to the Corinthians:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching

was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (2 Corinthians 4:1-2)

Paul would not trick people into making a profession of faith. He would not manipulate, connive, or appeal to base motives. Clearly, Paul gave careful thought to *how* he presented the gospel.

A. There are three apparent responses to this topic.

1. One could embrace Finney's theology of the human will and design a ministry that focuses on persuasion. While many Fundamentalists have done so over the last century, let me affirm with Pastor Williquette that many Fundamentalists are *for* the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. God does not give commands to show us what we can do but rather to show us what we must but cannot do. His law is to drive us to the gospel, which is the record of His work to save sinners, otherwise utterly dead in their trespasses and sins. One does not have to embrace the entire Calvinist system of Nettleton and Edwards to believe that sinners are dead, and nothing we say or do in our preaching and ministries should send them the false message that they are in control of their destinies.
2. One could reject Finney's theology of the human will and with it many of Finney's methodologies. Some pastors will not invite sinners to respond physically to an appeal, viewing the altar call as a dangerous and intrinsically Arminian innovation. They will not hold a series of special services, perhaps with an evangelist, with the specific purpose of proclaiming salvation. Their task, they say, is steady, consistent exposition of scriptural paragraphs, and if sinners get saved in the process, well and good. That's God's business. Some repudiate visitation programs. Some—the Primitive Baptists, in particular, who were vocal opponents of Finney in the 19th century—will not support mission boards, radio ministries, or even Bible colleges (horrors) because they aren't in the Bible.
3. May I suggest a *via media*.
 - (1) I do not personally believe that most of Finney's measures were intrinsically Arminian, Pelagian, etc. It is not wrong to try to persuade sinners. We preach to dead people precisely because God may use our preaching to wake the dead. I believe it is a false use of the Regulative Principle to suggest that any altering of contexts, conditions, etc. in the process of preaching is unbiblical because not

explicitly affirmed in Scripture. We inevitably do a great many things not explicitly affirmed in Scripture, and as long as these activities are not made normative (that is, required of others) or trusted in, they are harmless. Indeed, God may choose to work through them.

(2) Finney's methods were harmful for two reasons:

- (a) He *continually* used them, creating the impression that they were an essential part of his message and ministry.
- (b) He *expressed* his own conviction that God used these methods to save sinners. That is, he was a pragmatist. If we imply—as my Bible teacher did—that certain methods produce certain results, then we are placing the sinner on the throne of his life and not God, and we are replacing evangelism with salesmanship.

(1) To avoid Finney's error, then, a more balanced approach (than simply trying to abandon all nonbiblical methods—a hopeless task, at any rate) would be the following:

- (a) Use extraordinary methods only intermittently. Even Edwards, when he saw revival fires falling, did some itinerant preaching, held extra meetings, etc. He did not fear that holding a special evening service would be interpreted as trying to manipulate sinners and/or God. The consistent tenor of his ministry established a firm theological understanding of man, God, and salvation that precluded such misapprehensions.
- (b) Lay a solid foundation of careful biblical exposition and solid, God-centered theology that will inform people's understanding of *any* method we use. In the last analysis, a person needs to realize that his or her salvation was not solely the result of a fiery sermon, an impassioned appeal, a quickly-played invitation hymn, a bus ministry, or some other "method." He came to Christ because God chose him in Christ before the foundation of the world. With that theological foundation in place, God may use a great variety of "means" to bring the sinner to himself.

Does the sinner need to be persuaded or resurrected? The answer appears to be "Yes." Paul persuaded but God gave new life. We are also called to persuade men, but we must never believe that persuasion will be adequate. After all, they are dead. As Warfield says in concluding his famous lecture on the religious life of theological students, let us preach the word because ...

Perhaps, when you come to sound the trumpets the note will be pure and clear and strong, and perchance may pierce even to the grave and wake the dead.

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