

PREACHING WITH POWER

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5 • TV056A

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1 Thessalonians 1:4-5

“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”

First of all: There can be no saving benefit derived apart from Christ, no God-given grace, no spiritual life apart from a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now I’m not talking about union with a church. I’m not talking about union with a religious organization or doctrinal position but I’m talking about an intimate, personal, vital and living union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

There can be no benefits, there can be no blessings, and there can be no saving grace. There can be none of God’s mercy except through a vital and living union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the Lord said in **John 15:5-6:** *“I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me you can do nothing. If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch and is withered and men gather them and cast them into the fire.”*

This is a vine and branch relationship. Christ is the Vine and we’re the branches. We derive all of our life, all of our nourishment, all of our spiritual strength from Him. Again, He said; *“I am the head and you are the body.”*

PREACHING WITH POWER

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

And then Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:27**; *“The riches of the glory of the Gospel is Christ in you; that’s the hope of glory, Christ in you.”* And again, Paul wrote in **Galatians 4:19**; *“My little children I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.”*

And then in **2 Corinthians 5:17** the apostle said; *“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away and all things become new.”* This is the important thing, not to be in the church, but to be in Christ, not to be in a religious organization but to be in Christ, Christ in you and you in Christ.

Our Lord prayed in **John 17**; it’s called the, “Priestly prayer of the Master,” talking to the Father, and he said in **verses 20-23**; *“Father; neither pray I for these alone but for them also which shall believe on me through their word (or through their preaching) that they may be one as thou Father art in me and I in thee, I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one.”*

Christ in you; that’s the hope of glory.

In **John 14:23** Jesus answered and said unto him: *“If a man love me he will keep my words and my Father will love him; (now watch this next line) and we will come unto him and make our abode with him and in him.”*

Paul writing about the believer’s life in **Galatians 2:20** said: *“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

This is what’s missing in present-day religion. This is what’s missing in present-day decisionism, professions of religion, form and ceremony, zeal and denominationalism. What’s missing is the living relationship with Christ.

Men and women are in the church. They’re in religion but they’re not in Christ. Now, if Christ and I are one, I live because He lives. If Christ and I are one, *“I am accepted in the beloved.”* If Christ and I are one I am holy because He is holy.

If Christ and I are one my life will bear the fruits of Christ, love, joy, peace, kindness, and patience. If I and Christ are one I’m a joint-heir with Christ. If Christ and I are one I am seated with Christ at the right hand of God, who He is and what He has, and where He is I am too because I am one with Christ.

I am inseparably united. I am eternally joined. I am in a living union by God’s grace with His Son. *“How shall He not with Him freely give us all things?”* This is the very heart of the Gospel message, *“Christ in you, the hope of glory. I travail till Christ be formed in you.”*

It’s not just to believe some facts about Him; it’s to know Him; it’s to walk with Him. It’s not to give mental assent and agreement to some doctrinal positions regarding Christ; it’s to be brought by the new birth by regeneration into a living, personal union, with the Son of God.

PREACHING WITH POWER

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Secondly: An important truth: There can be no living union with Christ without faith!

There can be no saving benefit for me or you or anyone else unless we are united to Christ. *“The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things unto the Son.”* And the Father loves us in Christ and redeems us in Christ and accepts us in Christ and forgives us in Christ.

Now we cannot be in Christ except by faith. Listen to the Scripture. Our Lord sent His disciples forth to preach and He said to them: *“You go into all the world and you preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.”* He that believeth shall be saved.

And then John wrote in **John 1:12**; *“But as many as received Him, to them gave He the power, (the right) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. He came to His own and His own received Him not.”*

“He was in the world and the world was made by Him but the world knew Him not.” But as many as received Him by faith, as many as believed on Him by faith, as many as trusted Him by faith, to them and only to them, gave He the right, the privilege, to become sons of God.

Listen to Paul in **Hebrews 11:6**; *“But without faith it is impossible to please God.”*

He didn't say it was difficult. He didn't say it's a hard matter; He says, *“It's impossible, without faith to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He's the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”*

Now we know that Israel left Egypt and they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. And when they came to the Promise Land and most of them did not enter in. The great majority of the people who left Egypt never enjoyed the blessings of the Promise Land. Do you know why?

Well Paul tells us in **Hebrews 3:19**; he says: *“So you see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”* And then He issues a warning to you and me; he says: *“Take heed brethren lest there be found in you and evil heart of unbelief.”*

Our Lord lays hold upon us by His Spirit, by His power. The Scripture says: *“It's the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.”* The Lord lays hold upon His people by His Spirit. His Spirit quickens and regenerates. His Spirit reveals Christ. His Spirit convicts of sin.

But we lay hold of Christ by faith. He lays hold of us by His power, by His Spirit, but we lay hold upon Him by faith. Now listen to this Scripture in **Ephesians 3:17**; *“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”*

Now that's what I was talking about in point number one. I said there are four important points that make up the heart of God's message for this generation of God's Gospel of grace.

PREACHING WITH POWER

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

First of all: There can be no saving benefit for you, me, or anyone else, without a union with Christ. That's where it all is; it's in Christ. We cannot be in Christ except by faith. Now we're in Christ; He dwells in us and we dwell in Him, how, by faith? Listen to that verse of **Ephesians 3:17**: *"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."*

That's how He dwells in your heart. He lays hold upon you by His Spirit. He makes you willing. He draws you to Himself. He calls you. It's the Spirit that calls us.

But, we lay hold of Him by faith. It was by faith that Noah built the ark. It was by faith that Moses left Egypt, refusing to be called the *"son of Pharaoh's daughter."* It was by faith that Rahab let down the scarlet line from the window of Jericho.

It's all by faith. It's by faith that Isaac walked with God and Enoch walked with God by faith. And you lay hold of Christ by faith. He dwells in your heart by faith.

Now, if you have any difficulty with that, if you have any doubt of the importance of faith; you listen to these Scriptures from the book of **John**. Now I'm just taking these from the book of **John** alone, the writings of John, the apostle.

He says in **John 3:14-16**; *"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so, must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth, believeth in Him, should not perish but have eternal life."*

And then in **verse 36** of that same chapter He says; *"He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

And then in **John 20:31** He says; *"These things are written, (all that I have written, all that the Holy Spirit has led me to put down on paper, all that I've written, I have written) that you might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that believing you might have life through His name."*

And then in **1 John 5:1** He said; *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, (is the Messiah, is the Redeemer of Israel) he's born of God."* And then in **1 John 5:11-13**; *"This is the record that God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. And he that hath the Son of God hath life and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. And these things have I written unto you that believe on the Son of God that you may know you have eternal life."*

When the Philippian jailer came to Paul he said: *"Sirs, (trembling, anxious, troubled), what must I do to be saved?"* And Paul said to him: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."*

A living, vital union with Christ is brought to you and brought to me from God as His gift by faith. And without faith it is impossible to lay hold on Christ. Without faith it's impossible to

PREACHING WITH POWER

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

have a living union with Christ. Without faith it's impossible to please God almighty; it's impossible.

Now remember them; the first one is there can be no saving benefit, there can be no glory, there can be no eternal life, there can be no union with God, apart from a living union with Christ. Christ and I have to be one.

And there's no way that I can have any kind of living union with Christ without faith. I must believe; I must believe His Word.

Thirdly: There can be no faith without the preaching of the Word!

That's exactly what I'm saying. I'm saying there can be no faith without the preaching of the truth. *"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."*

"God is Spirit and they that worship Him worship Him in spirit and truth."

Paul said, *"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth."*

Paul said, *"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel for it is the Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation."* And this is what I'm saying, that a man cannot be brought into a living union with Christ without faith and he cannot be brought into true faith without hearing the Gospel, without hearing the true Gospel, without hearing the Gospel of God's grace.

Now listen to the Scripture. Turn to **Romans 10:13**; *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how shall they call on Him in whom they've not believed and how shall they believe in Him of whom they've not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"*

There's the first three points I've given you. *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* That's a living union with Christ. That's being brought into saving faith with Christ.

But how are they going to call on Him if they've never believed on Him? And how are they going to believe on Him if they don't hear Him preached from His Word?

In **1 Corinthians 1:21** Paul makes it very clear he says' *"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."* And in **Romans 1:16** Paul said; *"I'm not ashamed of the Gospel for the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* God almighty is not going to call you or reveal Himself to you by dreams and visions. God almighty called you by His Word. God almighty reveals Himself in His Word.

PREACHING WITH POWER

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

The rich man cried from hell, “Father Abraham send Lazarus back to the earth that he may preach to my five brothers. I’ve got five brothers on the earth still living. I’m in this awful place and there’s no hope for me. You have said there is a great gulf fixed between here and you and no one can come from us to you and from you to us. But I’ve got five brothers who are still on the earth; send Lazarus back from the dead and let him preach to them.”

And Abraham said, “*They have Moses and the prophets.*” In other words, they have the Word of God, they have the Scriptures, and they have the preachers on the earth.

“Nay he said, but father Abraham, if one rose from the dead (Just think; if a fellow went back to the earth who had been dead, who had already been dead and buried for a long time and he suddenly appeared back on the earth in a resurrected body); they’d hear him.”

Do you know what Abraham said? He said; “*Son, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead.*” In fact, one did rise from the dead and they didn’t believe him.

Christ our Lord was crucified, buried, and rose from the tomb and appeared to all those people and yet they did not believe Him, they did not believe Him.

No, it’s the Word of God. God doesn’t call men by dreams and visions and feelings; He calls through the Word. Now listen to this; let me point out some things here; it is by the Word of God that men are begotten to life.

You know, we are dead in trespasses and sin. That’s what the Scripture says; “*We’re born in sin. We’re born dead in trespasses and sin.*” When Adam fell death passed upon all men, spiritual death.

Well how are men born again? How are men begotten to life? How are they regenerated, by the Word of God? Let me show you that, **1 Peter 1:23**; “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but by the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever.*” How are men born again, by the Word of God?

The Holy Spirit is the agent in the new birth. The Word of God is the seed. Our Lord said, “*A sower went forth to sow.*” Now the sower’s the Son of Man and the seed is what, the Word of God?

I don’t know why preachers don’t preach the Word of God. They preach everything but the Word of God. They preach their ideas and other men’s ideas and they preach about current events.

Why don’t they preach the Word of God? It’s the Word of God that the Holy Spirit uses to give life to sinners. Men are born again by the Word of God. But more than that; it is the Word of God that convinces men of sin.

PREACHING WITH POWER

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Paul said in **Romans 7:7**; *“I had not known sin but by the law.”* The law there is the Word of God. I wouldn’t have even known what sin was except the law said, *“Thou shalt not covet.”*

He said; *“The commandment came and sin was revealed and I died.”* That’s how men learn what they are by nature and what they are by practice. It’s by the Word of God that sin is revealed.

And then it’s by the Word of God that Christ is revealed. Why they said, *“We have Moses as our father.”* He said, *“If you’d believed Moses you’d believe me; Moses wrote of me.”* *“Abraham saw my day and was glad,”* Christ said.

You know, when the Ethiopian Eunuch was traveling from Jerusalem back to Ethiopia he was reading the Bible. He was reading **Isaiah chapter 53**. And God sent a servant; God sent Phillip, a preacher, down to preach to him.

And Phillip sat down in the chariot beside him and he said; *“Do you understand what you’re reading?”* And the man said, *“How can I except some man show me? And Phillip began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus.”*

And that man had Christ the Saviour revealed to his heart from the Word of God. Phillip preached Christ from the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit revealed Christ to that man’s heart. **Acts 10:43** says, *“To Him, (to Christ), give all the prophets witness.”*

And then more than that it is by the Word of God that faith comes. Now I said there can be no saving benefit with Christ or from Christ apart from the living union with Christ. And there can be no union with Christ without faith.

And there can be no faith without the Bible. The Bible is our foundation of faith. Christ is our object of faith. Faith looks to Him. Faith receives Him. Faith trusts in Him. But the foundation of faith is God’s Word. Faith believes His Word and therefore embraces Him.

For the Scripture says in **Romans 10:17**; *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”*

**“Sinner hear the Saviour call
He in His Word, right now, is passing by
He has seen your wretched fall
And He’s heard your mournful cry**

**He has pardon to impart
And grace to save from fears
See the love for sinner’s that fills His heart
And wipes away your tears.”**

PREACHING WITH POWER

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Have you heard the Gospel? I'll tell you this, if you're not hearing the Gospel you ought to go where you can hear it. If you're not being fed by the Word of God you ought to go where you can be fed.

God uses His Word. There is no faith without the Word; *"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, (not the preaching of foolishness) but the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."*

You're not going to be saved; you're not going to have faith. You're not going to come to know what sin is and who Christ is and you're not going to have faith in your heart unless you hear the Word of God.

Fourthly: All the preaching in the world can never convince men of sin!

All the preaching in the world can never reveal Christ to the heart. All the preaching in the world can never bring about true repentance and true faith unless that preaching is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now that's right. Paul wrote to that church in Thessalonica and I read it to you when I first came on the air. He said, *"I know brethren, beloved, your election of God: For our Gospel came not to you in word only."*

You know, that's how most people hear the preaching, just words, that's all, just words. But he said, *"Our Gospel came to you, (how?) in the power of the Holy Spirit."* It came to you in regenerating power, in quickening power, in convicting power, in revealing power. Our Gospel came to you in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord was standing one day preaching to some people in **John chapter 6**. And it would do you good to turn to **John 6** and look at these Scriptures. And He'd talked to them about being the Bread of life; He said, *"I am the bread of life."* "If you're hungry I'm the bread of life. If you're thirsty I'm the water of life."

He talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. He talked about coming to Him and receiving life eternal. The people began to murmur and they said, "Well we know who this is; this is Jesus, this is Joseph's son. This is the carpenter. How is it He saith He came down from heaven? Why we know His mother, we know His father, we know His brothers and we know His sisters."

And that's when Christ said in **John 6:44**; *"Verily I say unto you; no man can come to me except my Father which sent me draw Him.* No matter the authority of the preacher (and He spake like no man has ever spoken before) no matter the holiness of His life; He was perfect. None could convince Him of sin.

No matter the miracles which He performed with His hands by healing the sick and giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and strength to the lame, no matter. No matter the urgency of

PREACHING WITH POWER

1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

His plea, no man, no matter whatever his natural talents, wisdom, education, or intellect; *“No man can come to me (that is believe on Christ and receive Christ) except my Father which sent me draw him.”*

Preaching must be accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. Let angels be preachers but until God Himself, by the power of His Spirit draws the sinner, the sinner will not come.

And I say this to you, there can be no spiritual benefit from Christ unless we have a living, vital, union, with Him. And there can be no living, vital, union, with Christ, apart from personal faith. You must believe.

And there can be no faith without the preaching of the Word. But all the preaching in this world will not bring a sinner to Christ unless the Holy Spirit draws him, unless the Holy Spirit woos him and calls him. *“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”*

One great, old, hymn writer wrote this:

**“Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove
With all thy quickening power
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours.”**

That’s what it takes, the Spirit of God accompanying the preaching of the Word in power!