

A Return to Plain Preaching

by Henry Mahan

The sermon emphasizes the need for plain, Bible-based preaching that focuses on the power of the Holy Spirit and the Gospel.

Duration: 27:38

Scripture: Luke 24:27, Luke 24:45, John 5:39, John 14:6, Acts 10:43, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Hebrews 10:14

Topics: "Eternal Destiny", "Spiritual Journey"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of four powerful words that can stimulate an interest in seeking the Lord: life, death, judgment, and eternity. He discusses the significance of each word and how they relate to our spiritual journey. The preacher also poses five important questions that every person should consider, including what creates a real interest in salvation and how the scriptures are opened to a person's understanding. He emphasizes the need to seek the Lord and find answers to these questions, as they ultimately determine our eternal destiny.

Transcript

My subject this morning is a return to plain preaching. A return to plain preaching. Now, that's been the aim and goal of this television ministry ever since we've been on this station.

To return to the preaching of the Gospel in words that men and women, at least in their heads, can understand. They may not believe it, they may not receive it, but at least in their heads they know what we're saying. Now, this is what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 2, verses 1 through 5. I want you to listen while I read the Scripture, if you'd like to.

Open your Bible with me and read 1 Corinthians 2, verses 1 through 5. Paul says, Brethren, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom. Now, he's writing to Corinth, to the church at Corinth. And you know a little bit about the city of Corinth.

It was a city of philosophers, a city of so-called wise men, a city of education, a city of orators. And he says, when I came to you preaching the Gospel, I didn't come preaching the Gospel with excellence of speech, intellectualism, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of the Gospel of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

And I was with you in weakness, human weakness. I was with you 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, the Holy Spirit, and of power, that your faith should not stand in my wisdom, in my arguments, in my doctrines or logic, but in the power of God.

Now, my friends, I believe the greatest need of the church, television ministry, of preachers, people, the greatest need of our day is a return to plain Bible preaching, preaching that's true to the Scriptures, and preaching that men and women can understand, answering questions that people are asking, not answering questions that nobody cares about, but dealing with the issues that concern the people. Now, Paul was conscious of this. I can see that he's conscious of this need in his day.

In our text, he talks about his own preaching. Listen how he describes his own preaching. And he's speaking to a city that greatly appreciated enticing words of man's wisdom, intellectualism.

He's talking to people who were intrigued with these things. And he said, When I came to you preaching the gospel, I did not come with wisdom of words. I did not use worldly wisdom.

I did not come with fine oratory. I didn't come with excellency of speech. It doesn't matter if my speech is plain and contemptible.

At least you understand what I'm saying, he said. And I didn't come with enticing words of man's wisdom. I didn't come arguing and debating.

Everybody wants to debate and argue. But, my friends, preaching, the kind of preaching that God blesses, the kind of preaching that God uses, the kind of preaching we need to hear, is the preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what Paul said.

I came preaching in the Spirit and in the power of God. And the end of that preaching, notice the last verse, he says that your faith, your hope, should not stand in the wisdom of men. Well, I believe this because I was just persuaded that it was true by a certain speaker I heard.

He was so persuasive. He was so convincing. And Paul said, I don't want your faith to stand in my persuasion or in my arguments.

I want your faith to stand in the power of God. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men. If one man can talk you into a position, another man can talk you out of that position.

If one man can talk you into a religion, another can come along who's a better speaker or a little smarter and talk you out of that position. Those people down in Samaria, when the Samaritan woman heard the Master, she went down into the city and she said, Come and see a man that told me everything I've ever done. Is not this the Christ? Is not this the Messiah? And they went running out and heard the Master.

And then they turned to the woman and they said, Now we believe, not because of your words, but because we have heard him ourselves. And that's what Paul is saying here. I didn't come to you with oratory and excellency of speech and enticing words of man's wisdom and debate and logic and argument and intellectualism.

He said, I came to you in the power of the Spirit, preaching the Word of God. That your faith should not stand in my wisdom, nor in the arguments of men, nor in the schemes of men, but that your faith should

stand in the Word and in the power of God. Paul himself said, I know whom I have believed.

I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. It's a personal, living, intimate, vital union with Jesus Christ. That's salvation.

Now, return to plain preaching. I'm going to deal this morning with five questions. I have five questions I believe need to be answered.

I have five questions I believe that you're concerned about. I have five questions here dealing with five important issues faced by every one of us. I'm talking to myself as well as to you.

And let's try to deal with these issues in such a way that at least when we get through today, that you won't have to turn to your neighbor and say, well, what did he say? Well, that was pretty, but what did he say? I think you're going to know what I've said when I finish. All right, here's the first question. Let me give you all five questions, then I'll come back to the first one, so that you might be interested enough to stay with me through the whole message.

But here are the five questions. What creates a real interest in salvation? How does a man get an interest in seeking the Lord? Some of you are interested and some of you may not be, but what creates a real interest? Secondly, what promotes true conviction of sin and the need of forgiveness? Thirdly, what leads to a genuine faith in Jesus Christ? And then fourthly, how are the scriptures open to our understanding? How can a man understand the scriptures? You say, that'll be a dandy if you can deal with it. I think I can.

And then fifthly, what is the bedrock motive for holiness of character, conversation, and conduct? What is the bedrock motive? You men know what I'm talking about when I say the bedrock. That's the bottom foundation for holiness of life. We appeal to people for holiness, holiness, holiness.

Well, what's the bedrock foundation? All right, here's the first question. What creates a genuine interest in salvation? What will truly lead a man to seek the Lord? Now, the scripture commands us to seek the Lord. It says, seek ye the Lord while he may be found.

Call upon him while he's near. We're commanded to seek the Lord. The scripture says, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.

Our God says, you shall seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. Now, some men do seek the Lord. Some of you are seeking the Lord, but some do not.

So my question is, why do some men seek the Lord and some do not? What creates this interest in grace? What creates an interest in salvation? What creates an interest in the mercy of God? Well, I know this first. It's the Holy Spirit who awakens a dead sinner to his need, who awakens him to an interest in God's grace. The scripture says, you have he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.

So we allow that. That's so. It's the Holy Spirit who makes men alive, who quickens, who regenerates, who gives us an interest in the saving grace of God.

But there are four words which, if they make the proper impact on you and me, will stimulate an interest in seeking the Lord. There are four words. If they make the proper impact, these are powerful words, powerful words.

There are four words. If they make the proper impact on you and me, they'll turn us to seek the Lord. You know what those four words are? Life, death, judgment, eternity.

I have a life to live. What is life without peace, rest, and joy? What is life without comfort and hope? Death. I have a death to die.

I'm going to die someday. I talked about this last Sunday. I hope you heard that message.

I have a death to die. It's real. It's real.

And then the scripture says, it's appointed unto men once to die, and after that, judgment. Every man shall give an account of himself to God. That's what scripture says.

We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The scripture says, the sea gave up the dead which were in it. Death and hell delivered up the dead which were in it.

And all men, small and great, rich and poor, black and white, old and young, stand before God, and the books will be opened. And then there's an eternity to spend. And I'll guarantee you, my friend, if those words ever make an impact on your mind and heart, you're going to go to seeking.

You're going to want some answers. You're going to seek the Lord. That's right.

It's as simple as that. It's as plain as that. How dreadful to face death without God, judgment without a mediator, and eternity without any hope.

And that's what I'm saying. I'm saying that when these words make an impact on a man's heart and mind, he's going to seek some answers. Now, he may laugh and joke and live foolishly and carnally and give no concern and no thought to eternity.

That's what our Lord said about the rich young man. He said, you're a fool. Tonight your soul will be required of you.

It's as simple as that. When we become aware of the seriousness of life, of the certainty of death, of the surety of judgment, and of the length of eternity, we'll seek Him who alone has the answers and who has the hope. Seek the Lord.

Now, that's the foundation there. What leads a man to seek the Lord? And that man who realizes the importance of these four words, he's not going to settle for some foolish answers. He's not going to settle.

He's not going to commit his soul into the hands of somebody who can't even keep their own souls. He's going to look for a stronger foundation. He's going to look for a more certain foundation and hope.

All right, here's the second question. What promotes a true conviction of sin and the need for forgiveness? Conviction of sin. What really promotes a true conviction of sin? When a man cries, like the publican, what led him to say, oh God, be merciful to me, the sinner? What really promotes a true conviction of sin? What brought the harlot to the feet of Christ and caused her to bathe his feet with tears and dry them with the hairs of her head? What really made the apostle Peter cry unto the Lord Jesus Christ, Lord depart from me, I'm a sinful man? Well, I know first of all it's true the Holy Spirit convinces a man of sin.

Scripture tells us that. Our Lord said, and he, the Spirit, the Comforter, when he is come, he'll convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. I know the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, I know it's the law of God which gives us the knowledge of sin. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Paul said, I would not have known sin had not the law said, thou shalt not covet.

And then it's true that conscience convinces men of sin. Our Lord tells us about the heathen who have not the law, nevertheless do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, have a conscience that accuses or excuses them. So the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and conscience.

But my friend, a real awareness of sin, and the depth of sin, and the reality of sin, and the truth of sin, is only learned and realized when we see and become conscious of the holiness of God. A man can look into his own heart and conscience and be convinced to some extent, to some degree, of the guilt of sin. He can look into a written law and say, well, this is good, as opposed to that.

He can look at the consequences of deeds and acts around him and say, well, it would have been better if I had done this instead of that. I was wrong to do this. It would have been better if I had handled it.

But if he wants to understand what sin is, who sin is against, and the depths of sin, and the wretchedness and depravity of sin, and the length and breadth of sin, he's going to have to see it, not in the light of law or conscience or rules, but in the light of God's holiness. And we'll show you that in the Scripture. Isaiah, if you'll read the book of Isaiah, chapter 5, you'll find Isaiah, who was a religious man, a moral man, a prophet of God, and he was pretty hard on everybody, in chapter 5 he says, Woe is them, woe is them, woe is them, woe is them, five times, woe is them, and condemns people.

In chapter 6, verse 1, it says, And when King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, Isaiah speaking, I saw the Lord, high and lifted up. His train filled the temple. The cherubims and seraphims covered their faces and their mouths.

They cried in the presence of God, holy, holy, holy. And Isaiah said, when I saw the holiness, the immaculate, immutable, infinite holiness of God, I cried, not woe is them, woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

Take the prophet Job. The prophet Job was a brilliant man, a man who loved righteousness and hated evil, a man who defended righteousness, a man upon whom God himself bragged to Satan about Job's righteousness, that is, compared with other men. Job, in chapter 42, said, Lord, God appeared to him out of the whirlwind and spoke to him and rebuked him.

And Job said, Lord, I've heard of you by the hearing of the ear. But now mine eye seeth thee. I see the Lord in his glory, in his holiness.

What's his reply? What's his conclusion? Therefore I hate myself, I abhor myself, I repent in dust and ashes. Daniel, who purposed in his heart. Daniel, who led a kingdom.

Daniel, who was a man of integrity. Daniel said, When I saw the Lord, my comeliness, my beauty, my strength melted into corruption. The prophet, the beloved apostle John, who lay on the master's chest at the Lord's table, said on the Isle of Patmos, When I heard his voice, I turned to see who was speaking.

And he said, I saw him, and I fell at his feet as a dead man. Yes, sir, that's when a man will come to knowledge of what sin is, the depth, the length, the breadth, the width of it, the depravity of it, the wretchedness of it, the guilt of it, the filth of it, when he sees the holiness of God. And as he sees the holiness of God in direct proportion, he'll see the sinfulness of his sin.

The less a man knows about God, the less he knows about his sin. David cried, My sin is ever before me. Against thee and thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.

And Paul wrote in Romans 3, 23, All have sinned and come short of the law, of the rules and regulations, of the expectations of the preacher and the church, of the glory of God. We've sinned and come short of the glory of God. Here's the third question.

What leads to a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Genuine faith. What leads a man to faith in Christ? Now, there's some facts that are laid down in the scriptures which are unchangeable. Facts.

Will you listen to these facts? These are facts. They're unchangeable as the throne of God. They're unchangeable as the word of God.

Number one, the first fact is this. The law of God, the holy law of God, must and shall be honored. That's exactly right.

Listen to this scripture. Who shall stand in his presence? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart. Listen to the scripture.

Cursed is everyone, cursed is everyone, everyone that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them, not to admire them or consent to them to do them. Listen to this. Without holiness, holiness, no man will see the Lord.

Listen to Matthew 5, 20. Our Lord said, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness, the holiness of the scribes and Pharisees, you're not going to enter the kingdom of God. How good does a man have to be to enter the kingdom of God? Listen to me.

As perfect as God, as good as God. Now, that's right. God's law will not be compromised, it will not be repealed, it will not be destroyed.

The edge will not be taken off of it. It's going to be honored by every man who enters heaven. It will be honored perfectly.

That's exactly right. But now, whether you say, how in the world is a man, any human going to enter heaven? Only through the righteousness of another. That law is going to be honored by you or by your substitute.

You see, that's why Christ came down here and lived 33 and a half years as a man. He was born. He didn't come to destroy the law.

He didn't come to dilute the law. He didn't come to take the edge off the law of God. He came to honor it.

He came to obey it. He came to fulfill it, he said. He was born under the law.

He was made under the law. He was made of a woman to fulfill the law for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Christ is our righteousness.

He is the fulfillment of the law. He honored God's law. By one man's disobedience, we became sinners.

By another man's obedience, we became righteous. If you and I go to heaven tonight, if we die tonight and go to heaven, we'll walk into heaven's gates with a perfect righteousness, with a perfect holiness, with a perfect record. But it won't be ours.

It'll be our substitutes, our lords, our saviors, his record, his obedience, his merit, his righteousness. See what I'm saying? His holiness. All right? That's a fact.

Here's another fact. The justice of God's going to be satisfied. Scripture says, God will in no wise clear the guilty.

God is not going to clear the guilty. He's not going to look at the guilty and say, well, I'm going to let you off. The guilty, the soul that sinned, is going to die.

Every soul that sinned will die. The soul that sinned shall die. Sin, when it's finished, brings forth death.

God's justice is going to be honored. Well, you say, then we're all going to die. We are, or our sacrifice is.

We are, or our substitute is. We are, or our sin offering is. Yes, somebody's going to die for your sin.

You are, or Christ is. And you can't bring a basket of flowers to God and say, accept these for my sin offering. Without the shedding of blood, there's no forgiveness.

There's no remission. That's what the Scripture says. God says it's the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.

The soul that sinned shall die. That's why Christ died. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him. By His stripes we're healed. Here's another fact.

1 Timothy 2:5, there's one God and one Mediator between God and men. And that's the man, Christ Jesus. That's what God said.

Only one high priest, only one Mediator, only one intercessor. Christ said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

Now, when these truths are burned into your souls, and I've stated them as clear as I can state them. That's plain Bible preaching. God's law will be honored.

God's justice will be satisfied. And there is but one Mediator, one high priest, one righteousness, one holiness, one sin offering. By one offering, Jesus Christ perfected forever them that are sanctified.

Then you'll have an interest in Christ. And you'll close with Christ, and you'll embrace Christ. All right, here's the fourth question.

How are the Scriptures open to a man's understanding? Now, I know understanding comes by revelation. God reveals them by His Spirit. I know that understanding can only be taught of God.

Scripture says, No man cometh unto me to save your sake, except my Father draw him, and they shall be all taught of God. He that hath learned of the Father cometh unto me. I know God uses preachers and teachers.

The Ethiopian eunuch said, How can I understand except some man show me? But the key to the Scriptures, the key to understanding the Scriptures, is Jesus Christ. Listen to this, Acts 10.43, To him give all the prophets witness to Christ. John 5.39, Ye search the Scriptures, in them ye think ye have life.

There they which testify of me. Listen, Luke 24.27, And beginning at Moses, that is, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. These are the words that I spake unto you, Christ said, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, in the Psalms, concerning me.

Concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they may understand the Scriptures. What was the key he used to open their understanding, that they may understand the Scriptures? Himself.

He said, These are written concerning me. In the Old Testament, Christ is that rock. Christ is our Passover.

Christ is Abel's lamb. Christ is the tabernacle. Christ is the priesthood.

Christ is the sin offering. Christ is the atonement. That's the key, my friend.

You have the key when you have Christ. The Bible is not just a book of poetry, or the book of Proverbs, or the book of history, or the book of science, or the book of beautiful love stories. It's a book of redemption.

How God can be just and justify the ungodly. How God can save sinners, not at the expense of his holiness, not at the expense of his justice, not at the expense of any attribute, but in keeping with every holy attribute. Last of all, what is the bedrock motive for holiness of life? I know that by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil.

That's one. I know that God's laws and commandments are an influence for godliness of character. I know that influence and reputation have a decided effect upon our behavior.

But the bedrock motive for obedience is love. Love for Christ. Love for one another.

Love for all men. Love for the gospel witness. Love for the word of God.

Love for the church. Love for your neighbor. There came to our master one day, and he said, Master, which is the greatest commandment? And our Lord said, The greatest commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself.

On these two hang all the law and the prophets. Galatians 5.14, For all the law is fulfilled in this word, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Pledge cards won't do it.

Rules and regulations won't do it. Discipline committees won't do it. Appeals won't do it.

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