

# Plain Talk to My Generation

by Henry Mahan

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*The main problem with modern religion is that people are religious, but they don't know God, and they need to have a personal relationship with Him through true repentance and faith in Christ.*

**Duration:** 27:20

**Scripture:** Matthew 19:16, John 17:3

**Topics:** "Lordship Of Christ", "Repentance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of plain preaching to his generation. He emphasizes that no man has the ability to obey the commandments and please God. The preacher also highlights the importance of facing the matter of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and confessing Him as Lord and Master. He cautions against equating America, patriotism, and democracy with Christianity, stating that they are not synonymous and that America is not the kingdom of God. The preacher urges the audience to recognize their sinfulness before God and to listen attentively to his message.

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## Transcript

I have what I believe to be a very special message for you this morning, and I hope that you'll just pull up a chair and sit and listen to the entire telecast. Now, I'm speaking on this subject, plain preaching to my generation. A plain sermon to my generation.

Now this message will be on a cassette tape. After you hear it, if you'd like a copy of this message, I want you to write to me and we'll send it to you. I'm turning for a text this morning to John 17, verse 3, in which our Lord Jesus Christ said, And this is eternal life, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.

Now, my friends, I've been preaching long enough to know that this is true. That one essential thing in preaching the Word of God is to preach to men where they are. Where they are.

Not where they should be. Not where they think they are. Not where they ought to be.

But to preach to men where they are and as they are. Now, our Lord, in His infinite wisdom, spoke to different people according to their needs. There was a man called Nicodemus who came to Christ.

Now, Nicodemus was a very moral, religious Pharisee. A ruler of the Jews. This man, Nicodemus, thought he knew God.

He believed that he worshipped God. He believed that he had a sure entrance into the kingdom of God. And our Lord Jesus Christ talked to this religious Pharisee, this moral man, about a new birth.

He said, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He cannot understand the kingdom of God. He cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Our Lord spoke to Nicodemus, the religious, moral Pharisee, about a heart work. Not a work of theology or orthodoxy or rituals or legalism or ceremony, but a heart work. That which Nicodemus knew nothing about.

Now, when our Lord spoke to the woman at the well, He didn't talk to her about a heart work. He didn't talk to her about the new birth. He talked to her about sin.

Here was a woman that had been married five or six times, was living with a man that was not her husband, whose life was all confused and messed up and troubled, and He talked to her about the water of life. He talked to her about never thirsting again. He talked to her about His work as the Messiah.

He talked to her about true worship. He talked to her about forgiveness of sin. He didn't talk to this woman the same way that He talked to Nicodemus.

He talked about the same subject, knowing God, having a living relationship with God. But He talked to them in a different way. He preached to these people where they were.

Where they were and as they were. You see what I'm saying? And then there was a rich young ruler who came to Christ. And he was a man who was very wealthy and who wanted to do something to earn eternal life.

He said, what can I do that I might earn eternal life? Well, our Lord knew him to be a very proud, pious, self-righteous man who felt that he kept the law. So our Lord gave him something to do to inherit eternal life. He said, keep the law.

Obey the commandments. Well, no man obeys the commandments. No man has the ability or the power to obey the commandments.

No man in the flesh can please God. But what our Lord was doing was flushing this man out of his refuge of lies. He knew what the man was thinking.

And the man said, well, I've kept all these. I've kept the commandments. What lack I yet? Christ knew that's what He would say.

And then our Lord hit him at the delicate spot. He was a very wealthy man. He had people living all around him who were starving, who didn't have enough to wear, who needed the things of this world, and He wouldn't share with them.

So our Lord said, go and sell what you have and give it to the poor. And you come take up your cross and follow Me. Well, He didn't talk to Nicodemus about selling out.

He didn't talk to the woman at the well about selling out. But He met this man where he was. He was a covetous man.

He was a man who loved his riches. He was a man who hated his neighbor. He was a man full of greed.

He was a man full of selfishness. And our Lord met him where he was. Do you see what I'm pointing out? You don't just give the same pill to everybody.

You've got to find out in this matter of preaching where men are, where they are, and preach to them there as they are. Now, I know where my generation is. I've been around long enough and I've been preaching long enough to know where you are.

I know where my audience is. And I'm going to preach to you where you are and as you are this morning. This is perhaps the most difficult generation to preach to of all time.

And I'll tell you why. There's several reasons. Number one, nearly everybody is religious.

That's right. We've got more religion in America today than ever before. We've got less Christianity.

We've got less righteousness. We've got less knowledge of God than ever before. But we've got more religion today than ever in the history of this country and more than in the history of any country.

Or you can turn your radio or television on most any time of day or night and pick up a preacher. That didn't used to be so. There are churches all over town.

There are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of churches. There's a church for about every two or three hundred people in the average town. Nearly everybody today is religious.

This is a religious generation. And secondly, they all claim to believe in God. It's much like the conditions to which our Lord came.

Everybody was religious. Everybody claimed to believe in God. Everybody claimed to be righteous.

And yet nobody knew God. Our Lord looked at those people and He said, You don't know me or my father. They said, We're Abraham's seed.

We're Baptists. We're Methodists. We're Presbyterians.

We're Catholic. We're Episcopal. We're something else.

He said, If you were Abraham's seed, you'd love me. Abraham loved me. Abraham saw my day and was glad.

And our generation believes in God. And thirdly, most of them have made a religious profession. Most of them at some time have walked down somebody's aisle and made a decision for Jesus, made a profession of faith, and joined the church.

And they're still doing it every Sunday by the thousands all over this country. Walking down an aisle, making a religious profession. Churches have just rows crammed with people.

And yet empty pews throughout the church every Lord's Day. A bona fide sinner is hard to find. One of the most difficult things to find is a sinner.

Because men are justifying themselves before men and before God. That's what our Lord said to the people of His day. He said, You justify yourselves before men.

But God knows your heart. And that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God. There is much religion today, much preaching, and much entertainment in the name of God Almighty.

But my friends, today, God's character is not preached. We hear so little of the holiness of God, of the justice of God, of the righteousness of God, of the sovereignty of God, of the grace and mercy of God. We do not hear God's character and God's attributes proclaimed.

Therefore, our generation does not know God. We have not heard who God is. We have not heard the character of God preached.

And sin is not defined. Sin is not defined as a principle. That's what sin is.

People everywhere are preaching against sin, but not defining sin. They're talking about sin, but not clearly defining what sin is. Sin is a nature.

Sin is a principle. Sin is a spirit. A man is not a sinner because he steals.

He steals because he's a sinner. He has the principle of theft in him. He has the principle of evil in him.

Sin is a nature, and it's not defined. And sin is not against my neighbor. It's against God.

And true repentance is not defined. And true faith is not preached. And God's righteousness in Christ.

Does anybody know anything about God's righteousness in Christ? It's an unknown subject. And yet, Paul devoted so much time to the preaching of God's righteousness. In Romans 10, he said that's the problem with Israel.

He said they have a zeal for God, but it's not according to knowledge. They're ignorant of the God of the Bible. And they're going about to establish their own righteousness and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, which is Christ Jesus.

And then in Romans chapter 5, he says practically the same thing. He said the righteousness of God is in Christ. There is a righteousness manifested and witnessed by the law and the prophets, and that's Christ.

But preachers are not talking about God's righteousness. No, God's justice. Job asked two or three times in the book of Job, how can God be just and justify the ungodly? How can man be just with God? The justice of God, the cross of Christ, is not defined.

We don't even know the reason for the cross. Everybody knows Christ died on the cross, but they don't know why. They have not the faintest idea why the justice of God required His Son to die.

He didn't die as an example. He didn't die as a martyr. He didn't die as a Reformer.

He didn't die to show us how to die. He died specifically to satisfy the righteousness, holiness, and justice of God. The Lordship of Christ is compromised.

We're asking everybody to accept Jesus as their personal Savior, a term which is not found anywhere in the Word of God. But there's plenty of scripture which says, Just bow to Christ. Kiss the Son, lest to be angry.

Receive Christ. Eat His flesh and drink His blood. Embrace the Son of God.

Bow to the crown rights of Jesus Christ. I'm saying this, that modern religion in America is a satanic conspiracy against God, against men, and against truth. That's exactly what I'm saying.

And I've thought this sentence over quite a bit. Modern religion, going under the name of fundamentalism and all other kinds of religions in America, is a satanic conspiracy against God, against men, and against people everywhere. And we're being swept up in it by the millions.

We do not like God as He is, so we change Him. We do not like God as He's revealed in His Word, so we change Him to suit ourselves. He said in Psalm 50, Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself.

The God of creation, the God of the Bible, the God of the universe, is not declared in His true character. We have a God that we've cut out with our own little scissors and made Him just like we want Him to be. He does what we let Him do.

I hear people say all the time, God's done all He can do, now it's up to you. When did God ever do all that He could do for a man and that man not be saved? And I'll tell you something else. We do not like God's definition of sin, so we form our own definition.

Sin is not what I am, sin is what I do. That's what they're saying, but that's not true. Sin is what we are, and what we do is the result of what we are.

And what we are has got to be changed. Not just what we do, that's what the Pharisees did. Christ said they cleansed the outside of the cup.

They changed their habits, but not their hearts. Our Lord said, cleanse first that which is within, and then the outside will be changed. Modern religion starts on the outside and tries to work in.

Salvation starts on the inside and works out. The heart is made clean. God says, I take the stony heart out and give you a heart of flesh.

No, we change men's habits and leave their hearts bitter and hard and dead and cold and evil. Murderous hearts, divided hearts, double hearts. Hearts that hate God and men, though they're religious.

Clean as a hound's tooth, straight as a gun barrel, and just as empty. We don't like free grace. We don't like sovereign grace.

We don't like substitution. So we invent our own ways of salvation by works and deeds. Original sin offends man's dignity, so preachers don't preach it.

The gospel of revelation offends man's wisdom, so preachers won't preach it. The Lordship and authority of Jesus Christ offends their love of self. Substitution offends man's pride.

So modern religionists, using the Bible, oh yes, they use the Bible. Modern religious make up a God of their own. They make up a religion of their own and a heaven populated by Pharisees and do-gooders, but the Scripture still declares, salvation is of the Lord.

Salvation is of the Lord. God said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom? I will have mercy. And I will be gracious to whom? I will be gracious.

God's Word still says it's not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. The Word of God still declares this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He said, I didn't come to call the righteous.

I didn't come to call the religious. I didn't come to call the Pharisee. I didn't come to call the do-gooder.

The well do not need a position. I came to seek and to save that which is lost. And I'll tell you something else, and I want you to pull your chair up real close now.

I've got something to say to this whole generation of religious people. Our Lord said, my kingdom is not of this world. Now what preachers are trying to do today is make America and Christianity synonymous, and it's not.

What the average preacher is trying to do is make patriotism and religion synonymous, and it's not. Now I'm telling you something. You listen to me.

America is not the kingdom of God. America is not the promised land, whatever you think. Democracy is not Christianity.

No, sir, it's not. Our way of equal rights and individual liberty is not the way of life, and it's not eternal life. Now that's just so.

We're sinners before God. Listen to me. Don't leave me.

Listen to me. We're sinners before God just as much as the Communists are sinners. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Just because I'm an American doesn't mean I'm without sin. And just because a man's a Communist doesn't mean he is a sinner. We're sinners in the sight of God just as much as the Communists, the Socialists, or anybody else.

A conservative is just as lost as a liberal, even though he may be in a church. We need the grace of God and the mercy of God individually as much as they did in Rome, as much as they did in Japan, as much as they did in Nazi Germany, as much as they do in Poland or Russia today. We need the mercy and grace of God as much as anyone.

God is no respecter of persons. We're sinners just like they are. Sin and salvation and a knowledge of God in Christ is a personal matter, not a national matter.

It's an individual matter. The kingdom of God is in the hearts of believers. It's not in nations.

God doesn't save nations. He saves individuals. Christ didn't die for nations.

He died for individuals. And he has a people out of every tribe and kindred and nation and tongue unto heaven. And I tell you this, this relationship with God, this living, vital, personal relationship with God is through true individual repentance and true individual faith.

The scripture said, If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord, and believe in thine heart God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. And I'll tell you, this true repentance and true faith which leads to a true knowledge of Christ will make a person a new creature in Christ Jesus, bent on doing

the will of God and serving his cause of righteousness. You can't legislate holiness, but Almighty God can give it when he gives a new nature.

You can't legislate godliness. You can't legislate morality. You can't legislate obedience.

It's the work of God in the heart. And God can perform overnight a miracle that no man can perform with all of his works and religions and deeds unto heaven. And let me tell you this, and I'm far some of these things, but I want to tell you this, we don't want to get this thing on the wrong track.

America is not the kingdom of God. And we may clean up our streets, and our hearts still be far from God. And I tell you this, you can ban pornography, and you can fight the communists, and you can make abortion illegal, and you can elect conservatives, and you can balance the budget, and you can put prayer in the schools, and you can make everybody a church member, but every one of us has still got the greatest problem of all, sin which lives in the human heart.

That's the problem. That's the problem. That's the great problem, sin against God.

How can I be just before God? Not how can I be justified before men. Not how can I make my reputation right before men, but how can I be just with God? How can He be clean that's born of a woman? How can God be just and justifier? Depth of mercy, can there be mercy still reserved for me? Can my God, His wrath forbear, and me the chief of sinners spare? If Satan can, he will get us sidetracked and lose sight of the fact that four vital things face me as an individual. I've got to live with or without God.

I've got to die with or without God. I've got to face judgment with or without God. I've got to spend eternity with or without God.

Now then, when you go out this way and try your best to make everything just as moral and righteous and religious as you can, you remember that God Almighty's issue is a heart problem and a personal problem, and that we're going to stand, every man's going to give an account of himself under God. It's appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment. And we've invented all kinds of religious clichés and we're hiding behind them, those religious clichés which give us a false refuge.

One of them is this. Listen to this. You think about this.

Boldly and brazenly men say, I have made my peace with God. Have you now? You made your peace with God? My friend, that's an impossibility. Peace with God can only be made by the Prince of Peace.

The Word of God clearly says in Ephesians 2.14, He is my peace. Our Lord clearly told His disciples, My peace I give unto you. Colossians 1.20 plainly says, And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself.

Christ is our peace. He's the peace for the individual because He meets all that God requires. Now let me give you five or six things before I leave you.

No man, and I'm talking about individuals, and this is an individual matter. I know we need to unite together, do all we can to have a good government and a good community and a good city and good schools and all these things. But you can do that and not know God.

You can do that and not know Christ. You can do that and perish in your sins. I've got to personally, individually know God, and what I'm saying is do these things.

Clean up your community. Clean up your city. Clean up your government.

Do all these things. But don't try to make it synonymous with salvation. Don't try to make it synonymous with knowing God.

Don't call everything Christian because it's clean. Christianity is Christ, and it's a right heart with God, not only a right walk. But I'm saying this.

Our peace is Christ, but no man can speak peace to his heart who has not faced the matter of his sins. S-I-N-S Now John said, if we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and His Word is not in us. There's no difference, Paul said, all is sinned and comes short of the glory of God.

David said, I acknowledge my transgressions, my sin is ever before me. God will forgive sins. I don't care what you've done, or how deep you've fallen, or how long you've been in the gutter, or what you've been through.

God will forgive sin, but through the blood of Christ. God forgives sin through a sacrifice, through a substitute, through a sin offering. Jesus Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree, and by His stripes we're healed.

And when I'm convinced of my sins, and my sins are before me, and I'm aware of them, and look to Christ to cleanse them, God will have mercy on me. But you're not going to speak peace to your heart until you face your individual sins. Now, watch this.

No man can speak peace to his heart who has not faced the matter of sin. You say, you just said that. No, I didn't.

I said sins. Now I'm saying sin. Sins are what we do.

Sin is what we are. Sins are the result of sin. We commit sins against God because we have a sinful nature.

A man steals because he's a thief by nature. A man lies because he's a liar by nature. A man hates because he's a murderer by nature.

We need a new nature. This is what I'm saying. We've got to face this fact of S-I-N.

What we are. What makes us do what we do and say what we do and act like we act is because we're motivated by a fallen nature and a fallen will. By one man's sin entered the world.

S-I-N. The nature, the principle. And so death passed upon all men because of all sin.

All right. Thirdly, a man cannot speak peace to his heart until he's faced the sinfulness of his best deeds. That's right.

The best deeds. You know what Scripture said? Man at his best state is altogether vanity. Oh, Isaiah wrote, we all do fade as the leaf.

We're an unclean thing. Even our righteousnesses are filthy rags. Some people take great delight and satisfaction in their prayers.

Whatever prayer you've ever prayed is full of sin. Some people take great delight in their gifts, their good deeds, their preaching, their religious works, all these things. But without Christ, every act of religion is an abomination to God.

God requires perfection. A man may love God, but not perfectly. A man may serve God, but not perfectly.

A man may give, worship, do good things, but not perfectly. And I tell you this, if it's not perfect, God can't have it. You say, well, how is my worship accepted in Christ? Christ makes it acceptable.

We're accepted in the Beloved. Without Christ, we're castoffs. We're outcasts.

We're deserted. We're left like the infant in the field. Christ is our righteousness.

Fourthly, a man cannot speak peace to his heart until he's dealt with a matter of unbelief. You know why Israel couldn't enter the Canaan land? Unbelief. Unbelief.

That's the reason. The centurion came to our Lord, and he said, Lord, I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief.

The Holy Spirit convinces men of sin, righteousness, and what? Unbelief. Without faith, it's impossible to please God. We'd better be praying like the disciples of old.

Lord, increase my faith. I've got enough unbelief. I need belief.

I need faith. God Almighty is pleased with faith. We must have faith.

We must believe not only in God, but we must believe God. We must believe not only in Christ, but we must believe Christ. All things are possible to them that believe.

And then last of all, a man cannot speak peace to his heart until he's faced the matter of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If thou shall confess without Jesus to be Lord, not just your personal Savior, your Lord, your Master, the one who reigns over you, the one who controls you. Somebody said Christ is the most important part of my life.

When He's your Lord, He is your life. We bow to, acknowledge, and proclaim the Lordship of the Son of God. Now, this is the title of this message.

A plain, plain preaching to my generation. On this tape, there's another message I'll bring next Sunday called, My Religion. If you want it, send two dollars.

That's what it costs. We'll mail it to you by return mail. Until next week, may the Lord bless you.

Here's my prayer.

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