

# HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT

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**1 THESSALONIANS 1:4-5 • TV078B**

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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.”*

I want you to open your Bible today to the book of **1 Thessalonians chapter 1:4.**

Now, will you follow in your Bible? I'm going to speak to you on this subject: **“HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT.”**

Now, this is going to be interesting and I would like to have your undivided attention. It's an important message: **“HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT.”**

Now, look at **1 Thessalonians chapter 1:4 verses 4 and 5;** we are going to read. Paul said: *“Knowing, knowing brethren, beloved, your election of God. (I know you are one of God's*

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT

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

---

elect) *For our gospel came not unto you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.*"

Now, the people who heard this man Paul preach; they heard a true minister of God. They heard a true prophet of God. They heard a true ambassador of Christ. They heard a man who knew and preached God's glory and God's grace.

Paul was a true servant of God. He was sent of God. He wasn't a man who ran on his own and delivered his own message for his own glory and for his own profit but he represented the Lord of glory. They heard a man of God.

He called the Gospel, "*my gospel.*" That's right; he said, "*It's my gospel because God committed it to my trust. I've been entrusted with the gospel.*" He called it "*my gospel*" because he had been saved by it.

It's pretty hard to preach something that you haven't experienced. It's pretty hard to tell what you don't know and Paul had experienced the saving power of this Gospel and he called it "*my gospel.*"

He had experienced it in his heart, not just in his head. The Gospel to Paul was not a doctrine only; it was an experience. He believed because he experienced it. A man doesn't really believe anything until he experiences it in his heart. He may profess it. He may even preach it but he doesn't believe it until he's experienced it in his heart.

And then, he called it "*my gospel*" because he was going to share in the ultimate glory of that Gospel. They heard a man who knew the Gospel. These people heard a man who had experienced the Gospel. These people heard a man who in his heart knew the Gospel and called it "*my gospel.*"

And they heard a man who was determined to preach the truth of God's Word and a Gospel at all cost. He said, "*I've kept back nothing that's profitable unto you.*" He said, "*I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*"

"*Do I seek to please men or God? Now, if I please men, I am not the servant of Christ.*" If I preach what I think you want to hear, if I preach what I think you will support, if I preach what I think you will pay for; "*I'm not the servant of Christ.*" I've got to please God, not men.

"*Woe unto you if all the men speak well of you,*" the Master said. Paul said, "*I'm not only ready to be bound but I'm ready to die at Jerusalem for the glory of Jesus Christ.*" They said: "Don't go to Jerusalem, they will put you in jail and they will put you in chains."

He said: "*I'm not only ready to be put in chains; I'm ready to die at Jerusalem for the glory of Jesus Christ. Sirs; I believe God, and I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*"

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT

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

---

Let others court the praise of the religious world. Let others covet the filthy lucre of the religious world. Let others seek to build their kingdoms and followers. He said, *"I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."*

*"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ my Lord by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."*

Paul said, "I'm not interested, in the world, the world's dead; the world's been crucified as far as I'm concerned. And I don't want them to have any claims on me or any investment in me. The world is dead as far as I'm concerned."

They heard a man of God. They knew they had heard a man of God. They heard a man God sent. They heard a man who knew the Gospel. They heard a man who experienced the Gospel and they heard a man who coveted no man's silver or gold.

He didn't covet anything anybody could contribute or add to him. He didn't seek their approval; he sought only the Gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ. That was all that was in his mind. That was the object; the soul object of his ministry was the glory of Jesus Christ.

He called the Gospel *"the gospel of God's glory."* And I'll tell you, if our Gospel doesn't glorify God it's not of God. If our Gospel does not glorify Christ it is not of Christ. *"Whatsoever you do in word or deed; do all for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ."*

**First of all:** So these people to whom Paul is writing; they had heard a true servant of God. They had heard a prophet of God.

**Secondly:** Paul knew that God had an elect people.

This servant of God whom God had sent, to whom God had committed and entrusted in this Gospel; he knew he didn't run in vain. He knew that he wasn't sent on a useless mission. He knew that his ministry would meet with success. He knew God had a people.

Paul wasn't going out there hoping somebody would believe what he preached. He knew somebody was going to believe. Why, he said in **Romans 11:5**: *"Even so, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if it be of grace it's not of works."* There is a remnant; there's a handful that will believe.

Paul said, "God has a people, I know that. I don't run in vain. I'm not just beating the air. I'm sent on a mission. God's got a people." Paul said also in **Acts 18**; *"The Lord spoke to me in a vision one night."*

He said, *"I was about to leave this place and God came to me and spoke to me in a dream and in a vision and He said: Paul; don't you be afraid but you speak and hold onto your peace for I am with you and no man shall hurt you for I have much people in that city."*

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT

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

---

Do you know where that is found, **Acts 18:9 through 10**? Now, you just stay where you are Paul. He stayed there two years more. "Just stay where you are Paul, don't leave." "Why Lord; because I've got much people in that city?"

God has a people, Paul knew that, and I know that. Somewhere out there listening to me, there's somebody who has God's love set upon him. There's somebody out there for whom God Almighty has set His everlasting affection, who belongs to Jesus Christ.

Our Lord said: "*All that my Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I'll in no wise cast out.*" God has a people. And Paul knew this; he knew that these people must hear the Gospel because, "*The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, because God has begotten us again unto a living hope through the word of God.*"

*"Because we're born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever: And because whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

*"But how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?"*

So Paul knew they had to hear the Gospel. He knew God had an elect people, Paul knew that. There's no doubt about that; our Lord's got a people. Read **John 17**. Six times He talks about, "*The people whom thou hast given me, those whom thou hast given me.*" Christ prays for those, "*Whom thou hast given me.*"

He has a people and Paul knew that they had to hear the Gospel in order to be saved because; "*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*" And a man cannot be saved without faith, "*Without faith it's impossible to please God. He that cometh to God must believe that he is.*"

And then Paul was willing, this man of God, this servant of God, this gallant Gospel preacher; he was willing to endure whatever he had to endure that these elect people might hear the Gospel and come to faith and come to Christ.

He said in **2 Timothy 2:10**: "*Therefore I endure all things, (imprisonment, bondage, chains, stoning, shipwreck, hatred, and persecution). I endure all things, (weariness, pain, journeying's often); I endure all things for the elect's sake that they may also obtain that salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*"

Paul was a servant of Christ. Paul knew God had a people. Paul knew they had to hear the Gospel and Paul was willing to go wherever he had to go, suffer whatever he had to suffer, endure whatever he had to endure, put up with whatever he had to put up with, that those elect people might hear this Gospel and come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT

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

---

Now, when he was blessed with success and he was, he was; God honored his ministry. God blessed his ministry. And when he was blessed with success he didn't brag on himself, he didn't publish his reports in the newspaper.

He didn't send out a magazine telling everybody how many thousands he had won to the Lord or ask if they would send him a little more money because he could win a soul for every \$2.31 if you send it. No sir; Paul didn't brag on himself. He didn't seek the praise of men.

When he was honored with success he thanked God. That's right; he thanked God. He said in **verse 2 of 1 Thessalonians 1**: *"We give thanks always to God for you."*

And then in **2 Thessalonians 2:13** he said: *"We are bound to give thanks unto God, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."*

He said: *"I am nothing. I plant and Apollos watered but God gives the increase."* So then, *"He that planteth and he that watereth is nothing, but God giveth the increase. I'm not one wit behind the chief apostle but I am less than nothing, less than the least of all the saints, the chief of sinners."*

*"By the grace of God I am what I am."* I thank God. When God is pleased to save one, when God is pleased to call one out, when God is pleased to open a heart, when God is pleased to raise up a people, the apostle Paul didn't receive the facts of the people, the praise of the people, all turned their eyes toward the throne of grace from which all blessings come:

**"Come thou fount of every blessing  
Tune my heart to sing thy praise  
Streams of mercy never ceasing  
Call for songs of loudest praise."**

They said: "Thank God, thank God, thank God."

All right; Paul said, *"I know your election."* He's writing back to this church at Thessalonica and he said, *"I know your election."* How do you know it Paul? Well, there are several marks, several ways to recognize the elect; here's the first one:

**First of all:** He said: *"Because our gospel came not to you in word only but it came to you in power, it came to you in the Holy Ghost, it came to you in much assurance"*

In other words, these people heard the Gospel, not just in word only. The same Gospel is preached to all men. Our Lord said: *"God into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."*

I am preaching the Gospel and there are literally thousands who are hearing this Gospel this morning out yonder in Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky and they're hearing it in

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT

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

---

word only. That's the way all men hear. That's the way you've got to hear first; you've got to hear His Word.

If I weren't speaking some words you wouldn't hear anything. There would be silence on the Telecast but you are hearing it in words. But Paul said, "These elect; they didn't just hear the Gospel in words, not just in words, but they heard the Gospel in power," not just as an argument, not just as a doctrine, not just as a theory.

That's the way a lot of people hear it, that's the way most people hear it. But there are some, bless God, who hear it with their heart. They hear it in power and they hear it in a three-fold way:

First of all: They hear it in the power of understanding!

I understand, oh I understand my sins. I understand my guilt before God. When you heard my message last Sunday morning on "**How a Man can be Justified with God,**" some of you wrote in and said, "I understand my sins; I see my sins."

And then I understand something of the holiness of God, of the righteousness of God. I understand how that in Jesus Christ, now I understand "*how God can be just and justify the ungodly,*" I understand. You heard it with power, the power of understanding. "I see." You heard it in the power of faith, "I believe."

One lady wrote to me and she said, "I've been going about for 40 years laboring to establish my own righteousness, but now by the grace of God, I see Christ is my righteousness and Christ is my hope. I see, I see."

She heard the Gospel in power, in the power of understanding, in the power of faith. I believe. I believe that God has given all things to us in Christ. I believe that in Christ we have, "*wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*"

And I receive Him willingly as my Lord and Saviour. That's the power of understanding and the power of faith; you heard the Gospel. Paul said, "I know you are one of God's elect, because you've heard the Gospel, not just as a doctrine and a theory and words of argument and debate and differences between so many denominations but you heard it in power and you heard it in the Holy Ghost."

It came to you in the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the author of the new birth. The Holy Ghost is the author of spiritual life. The Holy Ghost is the author of the new heart. The Holy Ghost is the author of the resurrection from a spiritual grave and from darkness.

The Holy Ghost reveals Christ. That's His office work. That's what He was sent to do. Christ said; "*When He the Spirit of Truth is come; He will guide you into all truth. He shall not speak of Himself but He shall take the things of mine and show them to you. He shall glorify me.*"

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT

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

---

Oh, the Gospel came to you in power. It came to you in the Holy Ghost. It came to you in much assurance. You were assured and persuaded of the truth of that Gospel. There can't be any other way.

And you were assured and persuaded of your interest in that Gospel. *"I know that you are one of God's elect, because our gospel came not to you in word only; it came to you in power in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance."*

**Secondly:** I know you are one of God's elect, he says, in **verse 6; read verse 6**. We read **4 and 5, now read verse 6:** *"And you became followers of us, and of the Lord"*

This is what our Lord said of His sheep: *"My sheep hear my voice and they follow me."* Those two things Paul said, *"I know you are one of God's elect because you heard the gospel in power, in the Holy Ghost, in much assurance, and you became followers of the Lord."*

The Pharisee's came to Him; read that in **John 10 in verses 24-28**. The Pharisee's came to the Lord and they said: *"Now, if you be the Christ why don't you tell us plainly?"* And the Lord said; *"I told you; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. I told you but you believe not because you are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice; (they hear with power, with the Holy Ghost, with assurance) and they follow me."*

*"And I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all. And no man can pluck them out of my Father's hand."*

God's elect; how to recognize God's elect, they are recognized by the fact they follow Christ. They are identified with Christ. They are not secret disciples. They're not off somewhere hiding in the bush and come out of the woodwork maybe once a week and light a candle and act like a Christian and go back into the jungle. They follow Christ!

They're identified with Him as He was identified with them. He said: *"I'm not ashamed to call you brethren"* and we're not ashamed to call Him Lord. They followed and they identified with Him.

First, they identified with Him in public confession. He said: *"If you will confess me before men I will confess you before my Father which is in heaven. If you deny me; I will deny you."*

They confess Him in baptism which identifies us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. We are publicly identified with Christ. We follow Him in baptism

And then we are identified with Christ in the Gospel, in faith. We believe the Gospel. Paul said; *"I'm not ashamed of the gospel;"* I'm not ashamed of it. Why do you speak in subdued tones when you talk about the Lord and His Gospel; why do you speak to Him in an embarrassed tone?

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT

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

---

You can talk with a loud mouth about everything else. Why do you speak in such subdued tone about the Lord of glory and His cross and His Gospel? Are you ashamed of Christ?

**“Ashamed of Jesus can it be?  
A mortal man ashamed of thee  
Ashamed of thee whom angel’s praised  
Whose glory shines through endless days?**

**Ashamed of Jesus, yes I may  
When I’ve no guilt to wash away  
No tear to wipe, no good to crave  
No righteousness to claim, no soul to save?**

**But till then, nor is my boasting vain  
Till then I’ll boast the Saviour slain  
And oh may this my eternal glory be  
That He’s not ashamed of me.”**

Identified with Christ publicly, identified with His Gospel, identified with His people, identified with His cause, and identified with His reproach. He said, *“Marvel not my brethren. If the world hate you it hated me before it hated you and the servant’s not greater than his Lord.”*

Now, He said, “If they love me, they’ll love you. But if they don’t love me; don’t expect them to love you because we are going partake of the sufferings of the Lord.”

**“Must Jesus bear the cross alone  
And all the world go free  
No, there’s a cross for everyone  
And one for me.”**

Paul said, “I know your election, I can recognize God’s elect. They hear His voice and they follow Him.”

Now watch the next statement, **verses 7 and 8**: “And you became examples to others. And you became witnesses in every place.”

Peter was sitting there by the fire (this is interesting). He was sitting there by the fire warming his hands and they had arrested the Lord and Judas had sold Him out and betrayed Him. He was taken off yonder somewhere to be mistreated.

And Peter was sitting by the fire. All these people were around and somebody came up and said; “Well, you are one of His disciples,” he said; “no, I’m not.” “Oh yea; I saw you with Him.” “No, you didn’t see me with Him.”

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT

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

---

And a little girl came up and she said: "You are one of His disciples. I can tell by the way you talk; your speech betrays you." And brother; I tell you, there's a whole lot there. If you are one of God's elect I can tell by the way you talk.

Believers talk spiritually. Their foundation is built upon Christ and they like to talk about Christ. They love to talk about Christ. They love to talk about His glory, His sacrifice, His bloodshed, His shed blood because their hope is in Him.

And believers talk scripturally; their foundation is the Word of God. They don't prove anything by what they think because they know, "*their thoughts are not God's thoughts and their ways are not God's ways.*"

"*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*" They talk scripturally. They say, "I don't understand this. This is what God says and that's what I believe. That's why I believe it."

I can tell by the way he talks, you are one of God's elect because believers talk spiritually and they love to talk about the Lord. They don't avoid the issue or skirt the issue; they'll talk with you about the Lord.

And then they will talk scripturally. They don't prove anything about what the Baptist believe or the Methodist believe or anybody else believes but because God says it. They get back to the Word. This is our foundation.

And then believers talk humbly. You don't hear them bragging about what they are doing for God, not a believer, not a true believer. He says: "*I am what I am by the grace of God.*" I'm nothing. Whatever I am it is because of God's grace. He talks humbly.

He's not bragging on his holiness and bragging on what he gave to the church last year and bragging on how many souls he won and bragging about what a big church he's got and bragging about this, that, and the other. No sir, he's nothing and he knows it. I can tell you if he's a believer when he talks.

And then a believer talks submissively. He doesn't say: "I'm going to town this week and I'm going to build a new business and we are going to do this and that and the other. He says, "The Lord willing I'm going to do this" because I can't take another breath without His grace.

I can't raise this hand without His grace. I won't see another sight without His grace. God willing, God willing. The little maid said; "I can tell, you are a believer by the way you talk."

And I can tell God's elect by the way they walk. "*We walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.*" Enoch walked with God. The believer will walk with you if you're walking with God. If you're not walking with God you can't walk together. He's walking with God.

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S ELECT

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

---

Paul said: "I know you are one of God's elect; you heard the Gospel in power, the Holy Ghost, and much assurance. You followed the Lord and then you became an example to others. You became a witness; the Gospel went out from you to other places."

**Fourthly:** then **verse 9**; "*You turned to God from your idols to serve the living and true God.*" These Thessalonians turned from their idols.

You say, "Preacher; we don't worship idols. We don't have any idols. They have idols over there in those foreign countries but we don't have any idols in America." I don't know about that now.

Now, you may not be worshipping the calf of gold but maybe you are worshipping gold in another form. Hum? How about the dollar? America's bowing at the shrine of a dollar. That's right!

Those who do not worship gold may worship idols of honor, fame, and the praise of men. Preachers are guilty of this, the praise of men. "*They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.*"

We may worship our children. You talk about idols of stone; how about idols of clay? That's what those children are, clay, husband, wife, children, loved ones, these too can become idols. We may as well worship beasts as worship these idols of clay.

If I love anything or anyone more than God it is an idol. If there's anything I can't give up willingly for the glory of God it's an idol. If it's anything I seek more than the glory of God it's an idol.

God's elect turn from their idols; they crucify the flesh, they do it every day. They take the family out to the graveyard and bury them and they say, "Lord; they are yours."

Now, if you take them they are already dead. My business, my income, my loved ones, they are already dead; I've already buried them. So, when it takes place Lord they'll just already be gone. "*The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.*"

And then Paul said last of all, "*You're waiting for His Son from heaven,*" you're waiting for the Lord Jesus to come again. I know you are one of God's elect because you are waiting for the coming of the Lord. You are waiting for Him with persevering faith; you are continuing in the faith.

"*You are waiting for Him to come and change your vile body into the likeness of His glorious body.*" You are waiting for Him to come so that you can see Him and be like Him. You are waiting for Him to come to take you home to your eternal inheritance.

I know you are one of God's elect!