

A Letter From a Believer

By Henry Mahan

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Henry Mahan Sermons

Zebulon Baptist Church
6088 Zebulon Highway
Pikeville, KY 41501

Website: www.henrymahan.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/mahan

...genuinely believe in your heart that God, satisfied with his obedience and pleased with his offering and accepting him and, thus, in him, raised him from the dead. Now he raised him who died under the guilt of sin. God raised him. Do you believe he raised him?

It is one thing to believe that Jesus the God man died on the cross and was buried and rose again. It is another to believe that Jesus Christ, bearing our sins and shame and guilt before a holy God was buried in shame and raised by the hand and the power of God. Do you believe that? You will be saved.

Why with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. That is where this work of conviction, conversion and repentance and faith takes place. It is in the heart privately, personally, individually in the heart. A lot of our folks, our Lord said, call me Lord with their lips. But their hearts are far from me. And a lot of folks are going to say to me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not this, that and the other thing." I will say, "I never knew them." Because it is with the heart man believes unto righteousness. It is with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation. But the Scripture plainly saith, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame, shall not be confounded and shall not be ashamed of him."

There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek. They have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. But the same Lord over all is rich unto all who in sincerity and earnestness and hunger and thirst call on him. No man ever genuinely before God called on God for mercy and didn't get it. That ain't so. Whosoever shall call you will be saved.

But how, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? Can't trust an unrevealed Savior. Just any Jesus can't save you. It is the Lord Jesus. And a man can't call on him in whom he hasn't believed and doesn't have confidence and hasn't deserted all other foundations and looked to Christ alone. And how shall they believe in him in whom they have not heard? Can't believe in a Savior and a Lord you haven't heard. You can't believe a gospel you haven't heard. That is the importance of preaching the Word, preaching the gospel.

And how are they going to hear it without a preacher? Not just any preacher, but God's preacher. And how shall they preach unless God sends them?

He said, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields. They are white already to the harvest." Don't say, "There is three months to the harvest." They are white already. Pray ye that the Lord of the harvest will send forth laborers into his harvest.

How beautiful, it is written, remember these words now. How beautiful, how precious, what a God send, what a gift from heaven are the feet of them that come bearing the gospel of peace and bringing glad tidings of good things. Oh, that is better than the president coming to town because somebody is coming with the gospel for us poor, needy sinners. Somebody is coming with the proclamation of good news. A lot of folks don't believe that. I will tell you about one in a minute that does.

But that is what it said. They do not all obey the gospel. They won't all hear. They won't all believe it. They won't all see the preciousness of that message or the messenger. No, they don't obey the gospel.

Isaiah, like every other prophet has moaned and groaned before God. "Lord, who hath believed our report?" Not many, not many.

So, then, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. That is it.

All right. I read the Scripture to you and I know that you heard it and I know that these things that I have tried to lend emphasis unto as I read will come to your mind as I continue.

I want to share a letter with you which is a living example of what Paul is saying in these verses, one of the finest letters I have ever received in all of my ministry from anybody, anywhere, summing up exactly what I preach, try to preach and what I believe.

This letter is from a young woman. I would say she is in her mid 30s, maybe less. She lives in another state. And this couple, they have some children. This couple, like all of us, was brought up in religion, but didn't know the gospel. And in God's good providence, as I read a moment ago, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" And in God's good providence a man in West Virginia, way up in backland, up in that area was listening to our program and taping every program. He was taping the Sunday morning TV program. And he decided that he wanted this couple to hear this gospel so he mailed them a tape with five or six of my messages on the tape.

They started listening. And he mailed them more and they got in touch with me and I got in touch with them. And they were just tremendously affected by this gospel.

And not too many months ago I was preaching in their area and I went over and had supper in their home and we spent quite a bit of time talking. And to be perfectly honest with you, while I was impressed with the husband's interest and zeal in learning the

gospel of Christ, I wasn't too sure about her. I didn't know whether she—and she will confess that in here—whether if she was really hearing me, hearing me what I was saying about the master.

But I got this letter this morning. I was sitting at my desk trying to find something to preach on. And anybody in here ever gone through that? And I came over here to the study and Martha handed me this letter and I took it home and I said, “I have got my message for tonight.”

Now you listen. It is divided into six parts. This letter has six divisions. Now here is the first one and I want you to listen how this is spelled out. Here is my first point.

The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ comes by revelation. It doesn't come through heritage. It doesn't come through ancestry. It doesn't come through education. We bring up our children in the Church. That is so. And we are going to continue to do so and expose them to the gospel. God had got to teach them the way of life. He has got to reveal Christ to their hearts. And no matter how strict your religious background and how dedicated you were to that morality and that religion and that background, you have got to meet Christ as a sinner. And I mean a hungry sinner and a needy sinner and a lost sinner and a helpless sinner.

And this gospel comes by revelation through the preaching of the Word of God, now, through the preaching of the Word. You.... he said, “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 are they going to hear without a preacher?” Somebody has got to be sent of God to his sheep to preach the gospel.

And it will be preached to those who sincerely want to hear it and hunger to hear it. Now you listen to her.

I hope this finds you doing well. It has been too long since we were so enjoying our time together here with you. My husband and I feel so close to you, though, because we watch one of your video teaching tapes almost every day. We share a common hunger for the truth of God. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

And we have both been forever affected by the gospel for we finally understand. We finally—and she underscored finally.

I am amazed how long we have taken for granted this most important thing that our Lord did on this earth. He died on a cross. Take it for granted.

Always known that. Have you always known that? It is like they have just discovered it.

And I must confess that when we began to watch your messages on tape I wondered when you were going to get into some other subjects. I always believed Jesus died on the

cross. I didn't think we needed any more teaching on that. That is the reason I was wondering if she was hearing me. It is who is he that died on the cross. It is why did he die on the cross. That God may be just and justifier. It is what did he accomplish? He didn't die as a martyr or a down payment. He put away our transgressions.

But for my husband the immediate impact of your messages was overwhelming. He had always had something unsettling within him regarding Calvary's cross.

What happened on that cross?

And now he was developing a whole new attitude toward the gospel. I tell you, when people get to... when they get a hunger and a desire for the truth of God and the gospel, God will send them the gospel, especially when they are genuine. She said, "Listen to this. He watched your tapes several times a day and every night, every night, not just on Sunday morning, every night, would put one or two lessons on us, on tape for us to watch together."

Now if a person really gets this interested in the gospel to where they are going out and get some books and get some tapes and come and hear the Word and every day, every day. She said, "Every day we were... we had a common hunger for the truth and every day we studied this gospel."

You know, I noticed that. I wondered when you were going to get on some other subject. You know, I thought about Paul saying to the Corinthians, "I am determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. We preach Christ and him crucified."

Oh, here is point number two. Because all the fullness of the godhead is in Christ. Don't you like this statement? We are both forever affected by this gospel.

I can tell you, the gospel of his grace, that is the only way it will either affect you in indifference or total commitment. There is no middle ground. Isn't that right?

All right. Watch this second point. Point number two. Here is the second division.

I praise God for his truth and mercy. I praise God for his truth and mercy. And when a person learns truth they will find out it is based on mercy because two... what? Just hold your seat now. This... I tell you. Two wonderful things have happened for me personally as the result of this gospel. God has given me the gift. Who gave it? God has given me the gift of finally beginning to comprehend at least an inkling of who he is and what he is by revealing his holiness to me. You think on that there. Do you see why I was so happy when I read that? His holiness, his perfection and, number two, my utter helplessness and hopelessness apart from the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Colin, that is the whole foundation of the gospel. That is the foundation of conviction. Who is God?

Isaiah. I saw the Lord high and lifted up. His train filled the temple and the seraphims cried, "Holy, holy, holy," and my hopelessness and helplessness was revealed to me and I cried, "I am undone. I am [?]." And then he saw the precious blood of Christ.

When that seraphim took up coal from the altar and touched his lips and said, "Your sins are put away and now you can rest."

Isn't that great? I finally began to comprehend, at least an inkling. And that is all we can stand in these mortal bodies, of who he is and what he is, because he revealed to me his holiness and perfection. And I see my utter helplessness and hopelessness apart from the precious blood of Christ.

Isn't that what Job saw? Same thing.

Who is God? I tell you. When the true living God of Scripture is preached and people hear it, now they don't just... they sit and study it over and over and daily and I will tell you this. What I am trying to preach it will bear observation and it will stand up under the deepest scrutiny by any honest man. That is right. And I challenge everybody here and everybody hearing this tape. Search the Scriptures and see who God is. And if that doesn't cut your legs out from under you and strip you and put you in the dust, you haven't heard it. Keep on listening. You might hear it after a while.

Isn't that great? God gave me personally two wonderful things, the gift of finally beginning to comprehend or have an inkling of who I am and the precious blood of Christ.

Whoa. I tell you. Watch this third one. I am just warming up. You ain't heard nothing yet. Honestly, isn't that right, Mark? It is a great letter.

Listen to the third point. Henry, I will never be able to think of Calvary lightly again. Never. Isn't that something? Or while you are singing that son, "Years I spent in vanity and pride, really caring not the Lord was crucified. Knowing not that it was for me he died on Calvary. And, oh, now the love that drew salvation's plan, oh, the grace that brought it down to man. Oh, my soul, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary." I will never be able to think lightly of it again.

You said, "How did you get all of that out of that?"

There it is. And now like you—now watch this—and now like you I can't ponder any particular subject matter regarding the Christian life without first considering it in the light of Calvary's cross and the gospel. It is the foundation for every part of our lives, isn't it?

I guess that is why it is the main part of all your sermons, because it is the foundation for every part of life. You want to learn to love? Go to Calvary. He said, "Love one another

as I loved you.” You want to learn to forgive? Forgive as God at Calvary forgave you. You want to learn humility? Let this mind be in you which was in Christ who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, took on himself the habit of a servant and was made in the likeness of men, yea, sinful flesh, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross.”

You want to learn where a man is exalted? Wherefore, God highly exalted him and gave him a name above every name. The way to the crown is the cross, John. The way up is down. That is what she is saying.

You want to learn mercy? Go to the cross. You want to learn obedience? What did Paul say? The love of Christ constraineth me. And if he died for all then were all dead and those who were dead should live not henceforth, not unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.

Do you want to learn giving? All giving is based on the giving of God when he gave his Son. Christ who was rich for our sakes became poor.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation for every part of life.

Fourth division. Now I hadn't preached a sermon in their hearing on the woman's place in the Church. I hadn't preached on that [?]. Have I preached that verse, Gerald? He goes out with me. Have you heard me preach on that? Don't you listen to this fourth part.

The next thing that I want to praise God for is his spiritual order in our home and how he accomplished it here through the gospel. So many of us wives enjoy reading about how the... reading about how the husband should be the spiritual leader of his wife and children, yet many of us consider our husbands spiritually inferior to us. God moved and revealed his truth through your preaching to my husband before he ever opened my eyes and heart to receive it. Like I said earlier, I didn't think I needed any more teaching on anything as basic as the gospel. I thought that, too. But because of God's grace through your perseverance as a teacher and my husband's desire to be taught and share the truth with me, I now have a whole new love and humbleness towards my God. And my husband has taken his rightful position as ordained and manifested now spiritually in my heart as the spiritual leader of our home.

I tell you what the gospel will do is what nothing else can do. You want to conquer a rebellious wife? God can with the gospel. You want to break the heart of an old hard husband who is not kind and compassionate and considerate and affectionate with his wife and children? Only God can do that with his gospel. You want to conquer a rebellious Son or daughter? Only God can do that with the gospel. Do you want an employee that will be submissive to this employer and do a good job? God saves him, he will. That is what this girl is saying.

Isn't that beautiful?

I learned my place at the cross and I learned my husband's place at the cross. And the cross of Christ enabled me to love and accept God's order of things with humility. Isn't that beautiful? That is the gospel of my Lord.

And I haven't mentioned to you... I haven't... that is the reason I say... and I have said this over and over again, you don't need to hand a believer a bunch of dos and don'ts and order his very existence, conduct, conversation and dealings in every way with a church covenant about that [?]. Preach Christ to him. And if that husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it. Wives, be obedient to your husbands as the Church is to Christ in all things. Children, obey your parents in the Lord. Huh?

Employers, render to your people that work for you what God has rendered to you remembering you have got a master in heaven. Employees, work for your employer remembering that your Lord is your boss, not that man anyway. Do it unto the Lord.

See, this gospel of Jesus Christ, it starts in the heart and it results in activity and action that will glorify him to God. But if you start on the outside and try to make people do things that they by nature hate, you will never accomplish it.

If God ever gives him a new heart, ever, ever, ever, and he does it through the preaching of the gospel, things will change around your place, my place, too, because the change is in here.

Isn't that good? Do you know why I was excited now? I like to get about 1000 like that. Oh, listen to the next one.

I know, Henry, that the glory is all God's. I think she does. We don't have any doubt about that. But I praise him for you and I want you to know my husband and I love you very much. You are always present in our thoughts and prayers and we hope the Lord is willing for us to spend more time with you this year. I have so many things I would like to sit down and ask you about.

The glory is God's, but I want to show you some Scripture here in Romans 13. Would you look at this in Romans 13? God uses human instruments and that is the reason we... in the home a godly father and mother are due honor and respect. They are worthy of honor. A godly husband is...

Sarah called Abraham Lord. I mean, respect and honor that he deserved. And the wife, too. And then in the church he says here in Romans 13 verse seven, "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything."

You know, everybody that deals with that verse usually deals with it wrongly. That has got nothing to do with borrowing money, not one thing in this world.

Do you know what it deals with? This man who is due respect of this woman, honor and respect and tribute and so forth. You render that to them, because if you don't you owe them what you are not paying. Isn't that right? You are not paying what God told you to pay. He said, "Pay tribute, pay respect and honor to those to whom it is due." And if you are not doing it, you owe that man.

That is the reason he says, "Don't owe him that. Pay it."

Owe no man anything, but love one another and he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Fulfill the law in paying this respect and honor and tribute.

Turn to Hebrews 13, Hebrews chapter 13. I would like to say this in every church in America. As far as an elders and leaders and pastors and preachers and missionaries are concerned, listen to Hebrews. If God sent the gospel...do you know what Paul said to Philemon? You see, Philemon heard Paul preach the gospel and God saved Philemon. And then when Paul wrote to him and told him he was sending Onesimus down there he said, "Now, I want you to receive him. Receive him like you receive me." He said, "If he owes you anything, charge it to me, but I am going to remind you, Philemon, you owe me your life. If I hadn't come along with the gospel you would be in hell." That is what it is saying. "You owe me your life because God sent me to preach the gospel to you."

A man may buck that, but Paul said that. The apostle Paul said that. And I know, like she started out there and I like the way she started out. The glory is all God's, but I will always in my heart have the deepest respect and love for brother Barnard has brought me the gospel. Thank God he... God saves. Thank God.

Look Hebrews 13. Listen, verse seven. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation," the end of their message, the end of their ministry, the goal of their ministry which is Jesus Christ. That is the goal of our ministry yesterday, today and forever the same.

Look at verse 17.

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

So I treasure that paragraph greatly. The glory is all God's, but I want you to know that my husband and I love you very much and you are always present in our prayers. Appreciation and encouragement. It means a great deal.

Point number six. Now this is good here. I will go ahead. She mentioned wanting to sit down and talk. I will go ahead and ask you something now and you might correspond whenever you have some time to drop me a line. There is something I want you to deal with. There is a saying, "You are what you are." Now to me, she says, that expression is

a view of hopelessness to ever become any more Christ like than we were before we were drawn to God.

Somebody told her and said, “Well, you just are what you are.” She said, “That expression is a view of hopelessness to ever become any more Christ like than we were before we were drawn to God.”

I understand that the best I will ever be is as filthy rags. I understand that all of the good deeds in the world won't get me salvation. But what about the Scripture that says, “Put off the old man and put on the new man?”

Praise the Lord. Isn't that good?

Will a person who had a former nature to lie and swear and lose his temper and gossip and be hateful, is he always going to be that way even after salvation? No. You can be sure I wrote her today, can't you? The letter is in the mail. The letter is in the mail.

I believe inside me that Jesus Christ not only saved me from the punishment of my sins, but he released me from sin's hold on my life. That is what we believe, isn't it? We grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. We are eternally sanctified. We have Christ's righteousness. We are perfect. But a man or a woman who does not love God's law and God's Word and God's commandments and desire to grow in grace and become more like Christ has missed Christ. A believer does not excuse or alibi or justify his sins in the slightest measure. He wants to be more like the Savior. He wants to grow in the fruit of the Spirit, does he not? And he will.

Is this right or wrong? I know we will never be perfect on this earth. But don't you believe that we are supposed to grow better? And, if so, how does that come about? Some say God will make us better in his own time. Others say we must discipline ourselves and flee from Satan by resisting temptation. I sure appreciate your thoughts.

You know, I mentioned over here, turn to Philippians chapter three. I mentioned this down in Crossville last week. Just briefly let me give you this.

The apostle Paul in Philippians chapter three verse 13, he uses 13 and 14, he uses four words, four words. And I know there is none of us here that want to say we are more lovable than we used to be or have more faith than we used to have or we are more gracious or more humble or kind or these things. But I tell you there is a growth in grace. And whether you will admit it, I believe other people will notice it. See what I am saying?

We all want to say we are the chiefest of sinners and we are. But other people notice that God does something for us. Our lives are lives of honesty and truthfulness, integrity and godliness because we are growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. We are growing in the fruit of the Spirit. We are not any better in God's sight, but I believe we

do get better in one another's sight, don't you? I know we do. And I know there is a noticeable difference. There is a growth.

But listen to what Paul says in Philippians three verse 13.

He says, "Brethren, I count..." Now that is the first word, "I count..."

"I count not myself to have apprehended."

What is that word? I count not myself to have arrived. And God forbid that any of us should even imagine that we have arrived in any sense of the word. We have got 10 million things to learn and 10 million miles to go. Isn't that right?

"But, this one thing I do."

Now here is the second one: Forgetting, forgetting. Forgetting the past. Forgetting my sins and my rebellion and my evil, forgetting my good works, forgetting all these things, forgetting, forgetting my... even my deeds for Christ. Forgetting experiences, forgetting all of these things.

Listen to the third word. "I reach forth." That is what she is talking about. I reach forth. I reach out to him, to his Word, to his Spirit's power. I reach forth to other believers. I reach for a better understanding of his grace and his gospel. I reach, I reach.

I haven't arrived. I am not going to sit around here and talk about what I have done, what I have accomplished or what I used to do or what I used to be. It doesn't matter. I am going to keep on reaching for what God has for me, his mercy, his blessing, his grace. I am going to keep reaching.

And watch it now. "Reaching forth unto those things which are before me and I will press... I will press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ."

Paul often referred to athletics, Olympics. Did you know that? often did it.

I don't fight as one that beateth the air. A man that is in a race runs all. Seeing we are surrounded with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race.

And here he is talking about a runner in a race and that runner has what in mind? The mark. Right across the end of the track is a line and that is that mark. He is pressing to break that line and get the prize. He is not going to look back. He is not going to look and criticize those around him and see how close they are to him or how far behind him. He hasn't arrived. And he is going to forget the... whatever he has gained. He is going to keep reaching and pressing with all that is within him to cross that line and to be crowned. Isn't that what he is saying?

And that is what I say to her, to this dear precious one. Yes, everything you said here is true. We are redeemed. We are saved. We are sanctified. We are righteous in Christ. Our righteousness is as filthy rags.

But I will tell you this. God's people glorify God in their lives. That is right. And they keep pressing toward that prize.

I will close now. I am sorry that I have talked to so long. I am not. I hope to see you again. I want you to send her this tape. And we will all say to her, "We hope to see her again, too," don't you?

Wasn't that a blessing? Oh, I just... I appreciate it so much and I thought you would.

All right. Mike, come lead us in a closing hymn.