

# Recovering the Gospel #1

By Henry Mahan

**Bible Text:** Romans 1:1-4

**Henry T. Mahan Tape Library**

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I am going to bring two messages today on the same subject. The title of the message this morning and again tonight will be, “Recovering the Gospel, Recovering the Gospel.” We might say reclaiming or rediscovering the gospel.

I don’t know exactly how to preach this message, whether to preach it in anger or whether to preach it in disappointment or despair or whether to preach it in concern or as a challenge. But I do know this. The most humbling and challenging thing that we face today, you and I in the pew and in the pulpit, is the awful, awful fact—and I am not an alarmist, I am a realist—that most preachers and professing church people and Christians or those who claim to be Christians do not know the gospel. They do not know the gospel of God’s grace. They do not know it.

I listened carefully this week to 1990s champion Billy Graham and this is the...he is the spokesman, he is the champion, he is the one on the pinnacle, he is the so called apostle of the day, heralded, acclaimed, respected, admired, to the degree that nobody publicly who has a large hearing will say one word against him. But I carefully sat and listened in my den in front of my television with my wife sitting over beside me and I experienced these emotions: anger, disappointment, great, great concern. And I looked over at her and I said, “Is this...is this God’s prophet for today? Is this God’s prophet talking? Is this all we have in 1990 to speak for God? Is this our Moses? Is this our Isaiah? Is this our John the Baptist, this compromiser?”

This fellow whose messages get worse every year, not better. They get more like a little boy reading a recitation. He is pitiful. No fire, no concern, no pathos, no understanding of this book. He is...it just tore my heart out as I sat and listened. Oh, they have what they call a gospel, but it is another gospel. They preach and use the name Jesus, but I tell you, my dear friends, it is another Jesus. It is a weak, impotent, flimsy Jesus for which the average man would have no respect, let alone worship or reverence. They preach a spirit, it is another spirit. Paul said that. “They will come preaching another gospel, another Jesus and another Spirit using these words.”

And he said it is another gospel. And he said, “I don’t care if it is an angel from heaven. If he is your champion or somebody else’s champion.” Paul said, “If he preaches not the gospel I preach, let him be damned.”

You can't appease and get along with all men and preach the gospel of God's grace which is offensive. Paul said, "Do I seek the favor of men or the favor of God? Do I seek to please men or please God? If I please men I am not the servant of God."

Today's gospel. Oh, they have a gospel. It is another gospel. They have a Jesus, but it is another Jesus. That impotent God Billy Graham presents and that impotent Jesus is not the Christ of the Bible, not the God of the Bible. And that powerless gospel he preaches which cannot conquer, which cannot overcome, which cannot bring down the walls of Jericho, which cannot accomplish the will of God, is no gospel at all. It is a salvation that won't save.

Today's gospel, what they call the gospel, all but ignores the person and work of my Lord. What they are stressing today is the work of the creature, the righteousness of the creature, the will of the creature, the works of the creature, not the person and work of Christ. Now that is just so.

Today's gospel is more concerned with your will than God's will. Our Lord taught us to pray, "Thy will be done." This gospel today is more concerned with your glory than God's glory, your reward rather than his. Christ said, "I am coming and my reward is with me."

As many as received him to them gave he the right, the privilege to become sons of God which were born not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but they were born of God.

Today's gospel calls on men to stand up and be counted. Raise your hand. Stand up. Be counted. The gospel of the Bible brings men to bow down in worship. And you know this and I know this that most so called worship services are nothing in the world but times of entertainment, applause, raise your hand, keep this thing going, get the beat going, get the shouting going, get the whoopee going, get all these...this flesh generated, you know. And to those average one of those preachers, a quiet worshipful spirit is dead. They say that. It is dead.

Well, Isaiah was a dead man. He fell at his feet. He said, "I am undone."

Job was a dead man. He said, "I put my hand over my mouth, not over my head, over my mouth and I will never speak again. I have seen the Lord."

John on the isle of Patmos fell at his feet as a dead man. He didn't...when he saw the Lord he didn't do a handspring or a cartwheel or start screaming and shouting, he laid prostrate on the ground at the feet of Christ. Today's gospel gives a man a title to heaven without a love for the living God. Today's gospel emphasizes what you should do for God rather than what God must, has to do for you.

That is what our Lord said when the religious Nicodemus walked into his presence and said, “Good master, we know you are a teacher come from God. We will recognize that. The things you do no man could do except God be with him.”

And our Lord said, “You must be born again. Unless you are born again you can’t see the kingdom of God or understand the kingdom of God or discern the kingdom of God or enter the kingdom of God.”

Before you try to do anything for God, God has got to do something for you which enables you to love him, which enables you to believe on him. A man that is not born again because he believes, he believes because he is born again. We have got the cart before the horse. We are telling dead men to speak and God will give them life. If God gives them life, they will speak. We are telling dead men to stand up and God will give them life. No. God has got to give them life and then they will stand up.

We need to call on him, not call on them. God, do something for them so they can know you. That is what Christ said to Nicodemus. Today’s gospel comes as an offer. It is not an offer, it is a gift. God will give you life if...No. God will give you life and....

Today’s gospel says salvation is an offer. I beg your pardon. It is a gift. You don’t offer a gift to anybody. You purpose the gift and plan the gift out of your love for them. And you bring them the gift and say, “Here it is.” If there are any strings attached it is not a gift. Isn’t that correct? If you require anything out of that person in order to receive the gift, you sold him something. That is prostitution when you give money for service rendered. That’s right. And almighty God doesn’t do that. He gives the gift freely. He requires nothing of you. You respond to his gift.

Today’s gospel substitutes human reason for divine revelation. Watch these people on television. It will be good for you. They don’t open a Bible. They grab a little verse over here somewhere. But these women that sit around talking all day on these talk shows and these preachers and their wives, they don’t read the Word of God. They tell you what they think. They are human reason. We have got to go by revelation, not reason. There is a way that seemeth right to men. Their end is destruction. Everything that seems right to these con artists is destruction. They don’t dare read Ephesians one or Romans nine or Romans eight or Romans 10 or John 17 or any of these Scriptures in their entirety.

Today’s gospel substitutes a decision for regeneration. Today’s gospel substitutes church membership for divine union. Do you know what divine union is? I am the vine, you are the branch. I am the head, you are the body. That is not church membership. That is divine union with the living Lord. And because we are his body then we are in union with one another.

This hand and this hand belongs to the same person because it belongs to the same head. And that is the reason we are identified together and the only reason.

Today’s gospel substitutes a profession of faith for perseverance. Today’s gospel identi-

fies the Christian by what he does not do rather than by what he is and whom he knows. Come on, now. Today's gospel identifies a Christian by what he does not do. He doesn't drink. He doesn't smoke. He doesn't cuss. He doesn't commit adultery. He doesn't steal. He doesn't kill. Therefore he is a Christian.

No he is not. The Pharisees didn't do those things and they weren't Christians.

A Christian is identified by what he is. He is a new creature in Christ. And whom he knows, I know whom I have believed. And what he does or does not do is a result of whom he knows and what he is. That's right.

Did you ever hear that preached? Then it is another gospel because that is the gospel.

Today's gospel utterly ignores the holy law of God. When do you ever hear these preachers, any of them particularly the champion, when do you ever hear him preach on the holy law of God that must be satisfied by the righteousness of the Son of God or the justice of God that cannot forgive a sinner without a debt being paid and death being suffered. Jesus Christ came to do something not for us and toward God. He came into this world to bear our sins because God is holy and just and just and righteous. He came down to this earth...Jesus Christ didn't become a man to show us an example. He became a man to give us a righteousness. He didn't die on the cross out of frustration or as an example. He died on the cross toward God that his blood might be a propitiation, a sacrifice so that God can forgive sin. God can't pardon a sinner without that sinner being dead, dying under his law. Christ died under that law.

This gospel today, so called gospel, presents an impotent God who waits to accept the least effort of the Christian, who wants to and is not able, who desires to and can't, who has a will, but you won't let him have his way.

“Let Jesus be Lord.”

I beg your pardon. He is your Lord. He is Lord of heaven and earth. He has all power over all flesh. He is your Lord. God made him your Lord. He is Lord by decree. He is Lord by design. He is Lord by death. He is Lord by his place where he sits. That is exactly right. He is your Lord. You recognize him. You don't make him Lord. You bow to him as Lord.

Let every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And they will. There is my anger, now. I wanted to be calm.

But it is frustrating, isn't it? It makes you angry. I get...here is the opportunity.

Today's gospel is based on what men and women think rather than what God says. The Bible, as a source of knowledge and a foundation for faith has long since been forsaken. What governs the average religious meeting? Sentiment, emotionalism, outward demon-

stration of flesh. And those things are past off on people as substitutes for inward peace, rest and joy in the Holy Ghost.

“Well, preacher, is there any hope of the recovery of the true gospel in this day? Is there any hope?”

I don't know. I really don't know.

Revival and refreshing is of the will of God. That is so. There have been times of revival. There have been times of reformation. God raised a Luther or a Calvin or an Augustine or someone like that, a Spurgeon. There have been times of revival. There have been times of refreshing. God has been pleased in his sovereign pleasure to bless communities and cities and nations at times in a most unusual fashion. God has been pleased to do that. It is the sovereign will of God. You are not going to bring about revival. I am not either unless he wills it. And God at other times has left men to their own wills for generations.

You know, between Malachi and Matthew there were 400 years of total silence from heaven. That's right. And it may be the net few years will be total silence. I don't know whether God will be pleased to send a revival in our day or a refreshing from heaven. I pray he might be willing to. I tell you if and when he does it will be through the recovery of the gospel. It has always been that way. God...there was a man sent from God whose name was John. There was a man sent from God whose name was Martin Luther. There was a man sent from God whose name was John Knox in Scotland. There was a man sent from God whose name was Evans down in Wales or up in North New England whose name was Jonathan Edwards. But he didn't manipulate revival. He preached the gospel. And revival came as a result of the preaching of the character of God, the need of the sinner and the person and work of Christ Jesus. That is how revivals come. You are not going to have revival through this silly emotional quarter singing. You get further and further away from God through that sort of thing.

It is when somebody stands up and opens this book and tells me in who God is. And men are smitten. It is like at Pentecost Peter stood there and told you. He said, “You with wicked hands have crucified the Lord of glory.”

They said unto God, “What are we going to do?”

It came not as a result of promotion and entertainment. It came as a result of declaring the trouble we are in.

Look at Romans one. I do know this. I do know this. Will you listen to me? God is never without a true preacher. He may be in jail in Bedford, but he is God's preacher. He may be preaching to a handful of people like John Fosset, 40 miles out in the country. He may be in the largest church in England like Charles Spurgeon. But God is never without a witness. The eternal covenant of grace and kingdom of God and kingdom of our Lord

Jesus Christ is never without somebody on this earth telling men the truth. That is exactly right.

It may be just a Simeon by himself down there in the temple, but he is waiting on the Lord. And I will tell you here is one and there are some that believed him in a little town called Ashland, Kentucky that we believe the gospel, God's revealed the gospel.

Here it is. Listen. Romans one, verse one. "Paul," and there is a lot of significance right there. Just Paul. Why, I think of this generation of preachers clamoring for a claim. I see them get their makeup just right and their hair fixed just right blown and so forth. And they get their rings all just right and these huge flower pots. They are all surrounded by...it looks like they come in...it looked like a wedding rather than a sermon, stepping out of a flower garden, you know, all in the bands and all these things and they are...all we are clamoring for acclaim and recognition and applause.

And this man here who had acclaim, who had recognition, he had it. He deserved it. He earned it. He ignored it. It is not Dr. Paul. It is not Archbishop Paul. It is not from prison to pulpit Paul. It is just Paul, just Paul.

"I am nothing. I am unworthy to be called an apostle," he said. "I am chief of sinners. I am less than the least of the saints. I am what I am by the grace of God. Naught have I gotten but what I received. Grace hath bestowed it since I have believed."

Just Paul a servant not a district superintendent, a servant, not a scholar.

A fellow said of me one time, he said, "He is not a scholar and never will be."

Thank God. A servant, a bond slave.

Do you know where that came from? That came from the boring of the ear in Numbers...Exodus 21, rather, when the slave, a common, ordinary slave choosing rather instead of taking his freedom in the year of jubilee, choosing rather to stay with his master because he loved him, not because he promoted him, because he loved him and because he loved his master. And he said, "Bore my ear and I will be your willing, loving slave."

Charles Spurgeon never went to college, never went to university, never went to seminary, never had a degree and was never ordained. And there was never a preacher in the last few centuries like him. And one time he got the idea that he ought to get some credentials. This is according to his own testimony. So he made an appointment. By that time he was quit famous and was preaching to 20,000 people at times in the music hall. And he made an appointment with a university president to enroll in the university. Did you read about this? He made an appointment with the president of the university to enroll in the university. The president of the university came to see him. And they were to meet at another man's home and talk about Spurgeon entering the university. That is how big he was even at that time.

And the maid, the university professor came to the house first. And the maid showed him to a room. And when the Spurgeon came a few minutes later another maid opened the door and showed him to another room and Spurgeon sat over here in this room for an hour waiting on the professor, the president. And the president sat over this room an hour waiting on Spurgeon and he never showed up. They were across the hall.

Finally, the president left and Spurgeon sat there and he said he was so disappointed that the man didn't keep his appointment. He did, but he didn't...God's providence wouldn't let him see him. And so he got up and walked out in the garden and he said it seemed that God spoke to him Scripture in Jeremiah 45 and said to him, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not."

Paul a servant.

Watch this now. "Called to be an apostle." It is not "Paul, an apostle." A man is not an apostle by nature. He is called to be an apostle. You don't make a man a preacher by giving him a license to preach. You don't make a man a preacher by giving him a piece of paper that legally entitles him to preach. You don't make a man a preacher by causing him to pastor a church. You don't make a man a preacher by ordaining him or recognizing him. God makes him a preacher.

Called to be an apostle, called of God to be an apostle. God will call him. God will teach him. God will open doors for him; called to be an apostle.

God let Israel make a king. They kept saying, "We want a king. We want a king. We want a king."

"Well," he said to Samuel, "Let them have a king." And they voted. They got a pulpit committee together and appointed a king. He was an impressive man. He stood about head and shoulders above everybody, a good looking fellow, smart fellow. His name was Saul. But they sure got messed up.

And then God said, "I have found David to be a man after my heart, not yours, mine, not your emotions. David is a man after my heart. I will make him king."

Called to be an apostle. Watch this. "Separated to the gospel of God." Whose gospel? "Separated to the gospel of God." Whose gospel? God's gospel. It is the gospel of God. Paul called it in 1 Timothy, "the gospel of his glory." The gospel of the glory of God, the gospel of the glorious God. It is his gospel. It came from him. It was purposed by him. It was provided by him. And it is for his glory. It is his gospel.

God thought it. Christ bought it. The Holy Spirit brought it. He purposed it. The everlasting covenant is just that. It is an everlasting covenant. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Thanks be unto God.

I thank God for you brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation. "He made with me," David said, "an everlasting covenant."

God purposed it. God purposed this gospel. God executed this gospel. It pleased God to bruise him.

In the fulness of time God sent his son into the world. God applies this salvation. You don't find God. God finds you. God is not lost.

It said over there that in Nathaniel and Philip and those fellows, it said that he found the Lord. He found the Lord because the Lord found him. The shepherd is not found of the sheep. The shepherd finds the sheep. Isn't that true? Salvation is of the Lord.

Paul said, "God separated me from my mother's womb, was pleased to reveal his Son in me."

God sustains it. We are kept by the power of God through faith. God perfects this gospel in us. he will raise our vile bodies.

What am I saying? Well, I am saying what the Scriptures say. I am saying, "God from all eternity gave his son a people out of every tribe, kindred, nation, tongue under heaven. Jew, Gentile, black and white, male and female, young and old, he gave them to Christ. And Christ came down herein the fulness of time and became a man and for those sheep and for that church and for those jewels and for those people and for that bride, he perfected a righteousness through his own obedience. He went to the cross and died and paid our debt in full. He didn't die as an example. He didn't die as a reformer. He didn't die with a blanket coverage to put away the sin of every son of Adam. He died for his church. He died for his sheep. He died for those who believe.

Somebody says, "That's not fair."

What's not fair about it?

"Well, I don't believe."

Well, why don't you believe?

"Well, I don't intend to."

You will not come to me that you might have life. If you wanted Christ you could have him. If you wanted a place in his Church you could have it. If you wanted to be redeemed you could be redeemed. He said, "Are you weary and heavy laden, come to me." But you will not. So he comes to us. And in the fulness of time he will quicken, through the preaching of the gospel he will quicken a man's heart. He will regenerate him. He will give him a new life. He will be born again, born from above, born of the Spirit of God, born by the power of God, born by the will of God, born by the Word of God. He



will be given new life through the Word. And that man will hear the gospel. And he will believe it. He will believe it.

And this gospel, look at verse two. It says, "Which he promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scripture." This is no new gospel.

Somebody says, "Brother Mahan, what is this new message you are preaching?"

This is no new message. "Moses wrote of me," Christ said. "Abraham saw my day. To him give all the prophets witness"

David said, "The Lord said unto my Lord sit thou on my right hand." Christ is that rock.

This is the gospel which he promised which... You know, the average preacher has got the idea that over here in the Old Testament God saved one way, over here he saves another way. They got the idea that over here it was law and over here it is grace.

But, my friends, listen to me. Isaiah 7:14 says, "Now to him give all the prophets witness."

Isaiah 7:14 says, "The Lord will give you a sign. A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel, God with us." And he said, "The government shall be on his shoulders. His name will be called wonderful, counselor, the mighty God, the prince of peace, the everlasting father."

And over here in Matthew the angel came and said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," which is an... which is the revelation of what the prophet said. "Call his name Emmanuel, God with us."

Over here in Numbers Moses smote a rock, water came out. Over here in 1 Corinthians 10 it says Christ is that rock.

Over here Moses slew a passover lamb. Over here in 1 Corinthians it says Christ is our passover.

Over here in Numbers chapter 21 Moses lifted up a brazen serpent. Over here in John here Christ said, "Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

Over here in the Old Testament the high priest went into the holy of holies once a year not without blood. Over here in Hebrews it says, "Our Lord, being a high priest of good things to come entered not the tabernacle made with hands, but heaven itself, not with the blood of bulls and goats, but his own blood and purchased eternal redemption." It is the same story.

There is a young lady up in Boston who is teaching a woman's Bible class using our Old Testament studies, starting with the fall and going all the way through the Old Testament

showing Christ our Passover, Christ our rock, Christ our brazen serpent, Christ Abel's offering, all the way through.

She wrote me this week and said, "Two ladies shook the class up and when they stood the week before last and said, 'We don't believe in interpreting the Old Testament that way.'"

One of them is the wife of a man trying to raise support to go to Japan as a missionary to tell them a lie.

My friends, the gospel concerns his Son. Will you hear me? The gospel doesn't concern anything you think or do. The gospel is a finished work. And it concerns his Son. All that he is, all that he has done, all that he is doing, all that he will do, you make no contribution to the gospel. The gospel is not an offer, it is a gift. The gospel is not a proposition. It is the proclamation of the person and work of Christ. The gospel is not a plea for a work to be done, the gospel is a presentation and revelation of a work already done.

Good news.

It got...I love to garden and I got...Russell will be glad to hear this. I got a brochure that this company wants to send me a troy built tractor, Russell. They have made me an offer. But I got to pay \$40 a month for it for the rest of my life. That's not good news. I wasn't interested. When I found out there was a catch I wasn't interested. It wasn't a gift. It was an offer.

But I tell you this. My gospel is not an offer. It is a free gift.

Are you naked? Are you hungry? Are you weary? He meets every need.

And it says here it is concerning his Son, his Son. That's deity. Jesus, that is the man, human, Son of Man, Christ. That is the Messiah. That is the emancipator. That is the Redeemer. Our Lord. That is the king. In other words the gospel is concerning the prophet, priest and king. His Son, deity, Jesus, my prophet, Christ, my priest, our Lord, my King. That is what the gospel is.

And when you listen to this, what is going on today, do you hear that? Now, come on. Do you hear it? I don't hear it. I hear them pleading for a decision or pleading for a hand raise or pleading for somebody to say a prayer or pleading for somebody to send them money and keep them on the air. I want them off the air. I don't want them on the air. I want them off the air.

If God wanted them on the air God would send them money.

"You are taking that too far."

I am not. God is absolutely sovereign. If God wants me to preach in New York City I will preach in New York City.

And look at this. It says, “He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.”

Christ Jesus, the sovereign, eternal, omnipotent Lord was made a man of the seed of David. Yes, a Jew. But I wish you would forget this...this Jewish organization over yonder in Israel claiming to be the people of God. You are the people of God. This is Israel. If those Jews are ever redeemed they will be redeemed by hearing just what you are hearing this morning, Jesus Christ and him crucified. And they won't come by a Jewish gospel. It will come by the gospel of Christ. That's right. And what we not...we are not going to win God's favor by sending them some more bombs and guns and planes. And God is not going to set up a Jewish kingdom on this earth. It will be a kingdom of Israel, but Israel is the people of God. All Israel is going to be saved.

When they went into Canaan there wasn't but two of them. That is Israel, those two. This is Israel. You are the children of Abraham by faith. I am telling you the truth.

And these fellows can get their Israelite flags and get their charts and draw all these things. Christ is coming to receive his Church, spiritual Israel. And they are not going to rebuild that temple and they are not going to start sacrificing sacrifices. Forget it. That would be a shame and disgrace to the gospel.

“He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.” Watch this. “And declared to be the Son of God with power by his holiness and by his resurrection from the dead.” There is your two proofs of his deity. He was made flesh and through his obedience and through his righteousness we have righteousness. Through his death we have an atonement. Through his intercession we have a priest. Through his person and work we have a hope.

But he was declared, he wasn't made the Son of God. He was declared to be what he always was. He is the Son of God. And the way I know he is the Son of God is by his holiness and by his resurrection from the dead. And that is what I am going to preach on tonight. Take up right there.

God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man Jesus Christ whom he raised from the dead and gave evidence to all men.

Many years ago there was a young communist who left an eastern University and traveled to Mexico to spread communism. This is years ago. He wrote to his fiancé, breaking off their engagement. She wasn't a communist. And he broke the engagement. And this is what the letter said. “There is one thing about which I am in total agreement and that is the cause of communism. Communism is my life. I work at it in the day time. I dream about it at night. Communism's hold on me grows, not lessens, as time goes by. I don't desire to carry on a friendship or a love affair or a business or a conversation without relating it to communism. I evaluate people, books, ideas and actions according to their

attitude toward communism. I am ready to live for communism and die for communism.”

You say, “That is dedication.”

Put the name Christ in there where Communism is and you have the way I feel and the way many of you feel. There is one thing about which I am in total agreement and that is the cause of Christ, the gospel. It is my life. I work at it in the day time. I dream about it at night. Christ’s hold on me grows, not lessens, as time goes by. I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, a business or a conversation without relating it to Jesus Christ. I evaluate people, books, ideas and actions according to their attitude towards Jesus Christ. I am ready to live for Christ and I am ready to die for Christ.

That is commitment. That is what Paul is talking about. And that is the glorious gospel. It has got to be recovered.