

Evidences of Grace

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

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In the event that you did not see the program last week, I brought a message from 1 Thessalonians chapter one on evidences of grace. But I am going to turn in the Bible to that same chapter today. I want you to get your Bible and open it to 1 Thessalonians chapter one and I am going to begin speaking at verse four on the subject, "Evidences of Grace." And this is part two of that message. And we will begin with verse four.

Now read verse four. Paul said, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." Brethren beloved. Paul calls all believers "my beloved brethren." This is a fellowship of believers. This is a fellowship and a relationship of believers called the family of God. They are all in the family of God. And they are all in the kingdom of his dear Son and they all love one another, brethren beloved.

Peter says this about them in 1 Peter two. "You are a chosen generation." He says, "You are a royal priesthood." He says, "You are a holy nation. You are peculiar, that is a separated and a purchased people." He said, "You are the people of God." And they are in many lands and many kindreds and many nations, but they are one family and they are one people, the people of God.

And then Ephesians chapter four Paul says this about them. Listen to this. This is that fellowship of believers. "Brethren, beloved." That relationship of a family. Paul says in Ephesians four, "There is one body, the Church, the body of Christ." There are many churches, but there is one true Church made up of all believers no matter where they are or who they are. If they are believers in Christ they are in the body, in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ and he is the head of that body, one body, one spirit, a spirit of unity. The bond of peace and unity is the Holy Spirit of God. And the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer.

If any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. We are all baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ.

Then he says, "There is one hope, one hope of your calling." What is that one hope? To be like Christ. We will see him and be like him. And that is the one hope of every believer, to be absent from the body, to be present with the Lord, to be conformed to his image.

Paul says, "There is one Lord and one Savior, one faith in Christ alone. There is one God and Father who is above all sovereign, who is through all and who is in all and one family of believers in all nations and tribes and tongues and people where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, bond nor free."

And these people like Noah of old have found grace in the eyes of the Lord and they know it. They have passed from death unto life and they know it and other people know it.

And Paul says here in verse four, "I know, I know you, brethren, beloved. I know you. And I love you, my brethren beloved. And I know that you are among the elect of God. I know you are."

Now what are the evidences? Well, if you will look at verse five... In verse four Paul says, "Brethren beloved, I know your election of God." And here is the first evidence in verse five. It has to do with hearing. It has to do with believing the gospel of Christ. It has to do with the gospel of Christ coming to us in the power of the Spirit.

He said, "Our gospel..." Listen to this. "I know you are among the elect, my brethren beloved, because our gospel came not to you in word only, but it came to you in the power of the Holy Ghost and in the assurance of the Holy Ghost."

You know, it is one thing to hear the gospel with these ears. You can hear the gospel with the natural ear and you activate the mind and it will set to work something in the mind, thoughts about what you are hearing. But when you hear the gospel with the heart that is when it comes in power, when you hear it in the heart. The Scripture said, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

So when the gospel comes in word only it accomplishes nothing. But when the gospel comes in the power of the Holy Spirit it comes not just to the mind, not just to the ear, it comes to the heart in power.

What is this power?

Well, first of all there is the power of conviction. When our Lord talked about the ministry of the Holy Spirit he said, "When he is come, the Spirit of truth, he will convict the world of sin because they believe not on me, of righteousness because I go to my Father to give to them a perfect righteousness and of judgment because the prince of this world is judged."

So when the gospel comes to a person in power it comes not just to this ear, but to the heart and it comes in the power of conviction. It convinces a man of his sin against God, of his lack of righteousness and of his bondage and captivity to Satan. That's right. Sin, righteousness and judgment, the Holy Spirit will convince men. That's power.

Secondly, it comes in the power of revelation. “No man knoweth the Father but the Son, neither knoweth any man the Son but the Father and he to whom the Son will reveal him.”

The gospel has to be revealed. So the Spirit of Christ comes in power with this gospel of Christ and reveals to us who he is. He is very God of very God. He is the Son of God, but he is the Son of man.

It reveals to us what he did. He took our sins in his body on the tree and paid for them. He worked out for us a perfect righteousness. Why did he do this? That God might be just and justifier.

Where is he now? At the right hand of God interceding for us.

So there is the power of revelation. “I know you are God’s elect,” Paul said, “because our gospel didn’t come to you in word only. It came to you in power, the power of conviction, the power of revelation so that you know who Christ is.”

And then there is a power of conversion. “In whom you believed after you heard the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.”

When did you believe? When you heard the gospel of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

And then there is a power of new creation, the new birth, born of the Spirit, born of the Word.

“If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.”

And then there is the power of sealing. He said, “After you heard, in whom you trusted, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit or promise.

So Paul said to this church at Thessalonica, “I know, I know you are God’s elect because our gospel didn’t come to you just in word, just in creed, just in catechisms and doctrines. It came to you in power, in the power of God’s Spirit, God’s holy Spirit, the power of conviction, the power of revelation revealing Christ, the power of conversion, a new creature in Christ and the power of creation. Regeneration is recreation, a new creature in Christ and the power of sealing.

And then the gospel came to you in assurance. Now listen to me and listen carefully, the power of assurance. “These things are written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may keep on believing on the name of the Son of God.”

“You mean, pastor, that a person who is saved knows he is saved, a person that believes Christ knows he believes Christ, a person who loves Christ knows he loves Christ, knows that he has passed from death unto life?”

I certainly do. I have no doubt...now listen to me. I have no doubt that a person who loves Christ knows he loves him.

He asked Peter, he said, “Do you love me?”

Peter said, “Lord, you know I love you. You know I love you. There’s no doubt about that. You know everything. You know I love you.”

Let me tell you something. I know I love my wife. And I know I love my children and I know I love my brothers in Christ. I know that.

If you would ask me, “Do you love your wife?” And I say, “I just don’t know whether I do or not.”

Well, you would say, “You are either a fool or you don’t love her. If you did love her you would know it.”

Well, I tell you the same thing. Do you love Christ?

“Well, I don’t know whether I love him or not.”

You are either a fool or you don’t love him, because a person who does love Christ just like he loves his wife and children, he loves the Son of God. And he knows it.

Our gospel...I know you are God’s elect because our gospel came to you not in word only. It came in power, conviction, revelation, conversion, sealing. That’s right. And it came in assurance. I know whom I have believed.

I have no doubt that a person who loves Christ knows he loves him. And I have no doubt that a person knows whether he believes the gospel. The gospel is the good news of God’s grace.

Abraham believed God and he knew it, he knew it. When God told him to leave home he left because he believed God. David knew he believed God. He said, “I believe, therefore I speak. The Lord is my shepherd. I know he is my shepherd. I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me by still waters. He restores my soul. I know surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Job knew his Lord. He said, “I know my Redeemer lives.”

Paul knew him. He said, “I know whom I have believed.”

The gospel came to you in power. You heard it with your heart. It broke your heart. It brought you to faith. It brought you to love Christ. It brought you to believe Christ and that is evidence that you are a child of God. It is the evidence of grace.

Here is the second thing. Listen to this. He said in verse six, “And I know your election of God because you became followers of us, followers of us.”

Who is us? The apostles and the prophets, the men who wrote the Scriptures. That’s right, the men who wrote the Scriptures. God used men, holy men of old spake as they were inspired of God to write the Scriptures. And the prophets. God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. He hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son who gave the word to the apostles who wrote the New Testament.

So he said, “I know, I know you are God’s elect because you follow the Word. You follow the Scriptures. You became hearers and not only hearers, but doers of the Word of God.” That’s right. You heard with the heart. You heard it in power, in much assurance and then you acted on the Scriptures.”

There is but one way that God speaks to people and that is by his Spirit through his Word. Now you can write that down. That’s right. He speaks to people by his Spirit through his Word.

Listen to these Scriptures. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God might be mature.”

The Scriptures, Genesis to Revelation.

“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”

“Desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby.”

Isaiah said in chapter eight, “If preachers do not speak according to the Word of God it is because there is no truth in them.”

So this is a sure evidence of a work of grace in a man’s heart, if the gospel of Christ Jesus, the gospel of his precious blood, the gospel of his perfect life, the gospel of his saving grace, the gospel comes to that man in power and in assurance and he becomes a follower of the Word of God. He believes the Word of God. The Word of God to that man becomes precious, precious promises. The Word of God to that man becomes more than just words on paper, but words of life. The gospel to that man, the Word of God becomes the source of comfort, the foundation of faith, the means of growth, the means of patience and the means of a blessed hope. And our watchword is, “Thus saith the Lord.”

You know, feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving. I trust the unchanging Word of God. Nothing else is worth believing.

So all right. "I know, brethren beloved, your election of God because our gospel came to you not in word only. It came to you in the power of God's Spirit, the power of revelation, conversion. And it came to you in assurance. You know that God spoke to your heart. And then you heard the Word of God and you believed that Word and you began to walk in that Word. Not just a hearer, but a doer of the Word of God. You became a follower of the prophets. You believed Moses. You believed Abraham. You believed David. You believed Paul, James and Peter and John, the apostles. You will believe them. You believe the Word."

Now, thirdly, in obeying the Word of God, in loving the Word of God, in reading the Word of God you became an example. You became an example not only to those in your homes, but to those in surrounding areas. You became examples to those in Macedonia where you live and Achaia and to other places. You became examples, examples. In other words, the power of the Word of God did something for you, made you a better husband, a better wife, a better worker, a better son or daughter, a better employer, a better employee.

That's right. Listen to Colossians one, Colossians chapter three it is, chapter three verse 18. Listen to how Paul speaks to the believers, to the people of God. "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as it is fit in the Lord. Obey your husband. Be a good homemaker. Live in peace. Submit yourself. Be a good wife. Husbands, love your wives. Don't be contrary. Don't be bitter. Don't be difficult to live with. Be a loving, kind leader in the home. Be an example in your home. Be an example of godliness and truth and peace. Children," verse 20. "Children, obey your parents. Love your parents. Honor your parents and obey your parents in all things. Listen. This is well pleasing to God. These are evidences of faith. Wives, husbands, children, not just religious folks, carrying their religion down to the church and kissing it goodbye when they walk out, but carrying it all through their lives in every area of their lives. Children obey your parents. Obedience to authority not only in the home, but in the school. Fathers," listen to this, "Fathers, mothers, parents, provoke not your children to anger. Don't agitate your children. They are still just children, prone to foolishness, prone to immaturity. Learn to love them. Be patient with them. Remember the sins of your youth. Be patient and concerned. Have a concern for the happiness of your home and the peace and joy of your home and the spirituality of your home."

Now look at verse 22. "Servants, servants..." Do you know who is a servant? Everybody listening to me is a servant to somebody. I am a servant. The Scripture says that when Paul talked about preaching the gospel he said that I preach the gospel for the glory of God, but I am your servant for his sake. And everybody who works for somebody is a servant. So let's just say, "Employees."

Now, listen to this Scripture. "Employees, whether you work in a steel mill or a grocery store or a clothing store or whether you work plumbing and electrician or on the railroad,

servants, employees, obey your employers. Obey them in all things in the flesh. Be an obedient diligent worker. Give it your best, your best shot every day.”

You know, the Scripture condemns pride, but here is one pride it does not condemn and that is pride of workmanship, pride of accomplishment, pride of production, not as a man pleaser, but as unto the Lord. That is what that Scripture says. You are working, but you are a believer. You are not working for that man. You are working for God almighty. And you are to be doing a good job and a full day’s work.

‘Servants, be obedient to your masters, not as men pleasers, apple polishers, but as unto the Lord. Masters, whoa, listen. Masters, you people who work other people...’

So you got people working for you. And about everybody listening to me has somebody working for them. You employ people once in a while. You employ them either temporarily or full time.

But here is what it says. “Give your servants, give those who work for you that which is just and equal.” What does that mean equal? Here is what it means: Proper for food, clothing and shelter. They have to live just like you do. That’s right. They have families just like you have. They have expenses just like you have. So, listen. You people who work other folks. You don’t need labor unions if people are saved, if they know God because they will treat others like they want to be treated. They will do unto others as they would have them do unto them. And a man who works somebody, he will give him a good, livable, just equal wage if he loves Christ. That’s right.

And here is what the apostle says. “Masters, give your servants that which is just and right and equal knowing you have a master in heaven. You have a master in heaven. And what judgment you judge you shall be judged on the basis. You will be judged with the way you treat others and with what measure you mete, what measure you give out to others, God will measure it to you.”

Boy, boy, boy. The evidence of grace is grace manifested. The evidences of faith are works of faith. The evidence of love is loving kindness.

Now listen to me. It is interesting how the apostle states these changes in believers who find grace in the eyes of the Lord. It is amazing how he states this. First he says in verse five, “The gospel came to you.” You didn’t come to it. It came to you. God called you. You called on him, but he called you first. You love him, but he loved you first. You believe him, but he sought you first. That’s right. The gospel came to you. Dead men don’t rise out of their graves. That’s right. “Thy people are made willing in the day of thy power.” The Spirit of God came to you with the gospel in power, in much assurance, in the Holy Ghost. He came to you.

Now, secondly, and you became something. You see it there, verse six? Verse five says, “The gospel came to you.” And then you became something as a result of that gospel coming to you. You became followers. You became what you were not. You weren’t a

follower of God. You were a follower of sin and evil and your own way. And you became a follower of God. The gospel came to you and made you a new creature and you became an example, you became by his grace a new person, a new creature, trees of righteousness.

That's right. All right. Watch this, verse seven now. "And so you were examples." The gospel came to you and you became a follower and being a follower of the Word of God you became an example. He did not say you ought to be an example. He said, "And you were an example." He didn't say you should be an example. He said, "You are an example." That's right. He didn't say you can be an example if you try hard enough. He said, "And you were examples." This is the way. This is the truth and this is the life of those who are born of God.

The gospel comes to them in power. They hear it and they become followers of the Word. They can't get enough of it. And when the Word works in their hearts, in their souls, they are examples. That's right. Eternal life and redemption, this is what Paul is saying. It is not just a creed. It is not just a profession of religion. It is not just an affiliation with a church or an organization. Eternal life is to know God.

Our Lord said, "Thou hast given me power over all flesh that I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me. And this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Eternal life is to know God, is to be born of God. He that believeth on the Son is born of God. He that loveth is born of God. He that overcometh is born of God. That is what took place. The new birth is not something you do for yourself. It is something God does for you. Being born from above. You didn't have anything to do with your first birth. That is between your mother and father. And you didn't have anything to do with your second birth. The Spirit of God gave you life. You were born of God.

Eternal life is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. All things are possible to them that believe. And the centurion gave a good reply to that, didn't he? "Lord, I believe, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief."

The disciples said, "Lord, increase my faith. Increase it."

It is to believe Christ. And then eternal life is to be a new person in Christ. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Eternal life is to pass from death to life. Eternal life is to turn from your idols to the living God. Eternal life, verse 10, is to wait for his Son from heaven.

Is Christ coming back? He said he would He said, "I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again to receive you unto myself."

The angels said he would. They said to the disciples who stood looking into heaven as Christ ascended and the angel said, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into

heaven shall so come in like manner as you see him go.” Christ said he was coming. The angels said he is coming. And John wrote, “Behold, when the Lord comes, we will see him and we will be just like him.”

“Preacher, what do you believe about the return of Christ?”

It is the return of Christ. I am not nearly so much interested in premillennialism or post-millennialism and amillennialism or the events and advents that will take place when he comes. I am interested in him coming, seeing him forever dwelling with him and being made like him. Christ is coming back and we are waiting for him.

Now here is the message, “Evidences of Grace,” in two parts, part one and part two on the same tape. Send two dollars. We will mail it to you. Here is the address. Until next week, God bless you.