

## Do You Really Want to Know the Gospel?

By Henry Mahan

**Bible Text:** 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

**Henry T. Mahan Tape Library**  
**Zebulon Baptist Church**  
6088 Zebulon Highway  
Pikeville, KY 41501

Website: <http://www.sovereign-grace.com/13thstbap.htm>

Online Sermons: <http://mahan.sermonaudio.com>

2 Corinthians five verse 20. Paul says, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ. We are representatives of Christ.”

Now I claim no special powers. In fact, Paul said to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter four verse 16, “Take heed to yourself and to your doctrine. Continue in them for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.”

We are not apostles. The apostles are gone. We are not the prophets of the Old Testament whom God visited, to whom God spake. They are gone. We are ambassadors of Christ. We are representatives of Christ. We have no special power. And then we have no special privileges. Paul said, “I keep my body and bring it into subjection lest while preaching to others I become a castaway.” We have no special hotline to heaven any more than you do. I claim no special privileges. It may be that I shall be a castaway. I hope not. I pray not. Paul was concerned about this.

And then I have no special position. Look over at 2 Corinthians four. You have your Bible open there to 2 Corinthians five. Turn back to chapter four and look at verse five. Paul said, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” I am not preaching Paul. I am not preaching his ministry, his message, his desires. I am preaching Christ. “And ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” We have no special position unless it is servants. For he said, “I am less than the least of all the saints.” Our Lord said, “He that would occupy the chief position, let him be the servant.”

And we claim no special holiness. Look at verse seven of chapter four. “But we have this treasure.” And don’t ever forget it. This treasure is the gospel. This treasure is the knowledge of Christ. This treasure is God’s revelation. “But we have it in an earthen vessel.” It is an earthen vessel, “That the excellency of the power might be of God and not of us.”

We have no special holiness. Paul said, “Christ came to save sinners of whom I am the chief.” So we make no claim to special powers and the preacher who does is a pompous fool. We make no claim to special privileges or to special position. We are servants. We are less than the least of all the saints. We are the chief of sinners. We have this treasure, this great blessing, this gift of God in a vessel that is clay just like yours. We have no special holiness. We recognize ourselves to be the chief of sinners, most unworthy of the

least of his favors. The only claim that any minister can make who is truthful with himself and with God and with the people is this. I believe the Word of God. I come to you preaching the Word of God. I am a representative of Jesus Christ as every believer is a representative of Jesus Christ. And I call on you as a representative of Jesus Christ, as a minister of his gospel I call upon you to cease from following men and to believe God's Word and to receive God's Word, to cease from following tradition however old it might be, to cease from following religious customs even your own deceitful heart. And find out from this book who God is and who you are and who Christ is and what salvation is and how God really saves sinners.

Do you really want to know the gospel? Most people don't. They want to hear what they believe. They want to hear what they have always been taught. They cannot cease from men. They cannot cease from the flesh. They cannot take their confidence out of the flesh and put it wholly and completely in the Word of God and in the Holy Spirit's power to reveal it to them personally. Do you really want to know the gospel? Do you really want to know God's divine purpose in redemption, God's purpose, God's glory? Do you really want to know how God, the holy God of heaven can be just and justify folks like, as Don prayed, you and me? Do you really want to know the hidden mystery, the great secret? God was manifest in the flesh. Do you really want to know?

Well, are you willing? Are you willing to lay your wisdom down at the feet of a sovereign Lord, your wisdom? Are you willing to lay your tradition, your religious custom? Are you willing to lay it down at Christ's feet and say, "Oh, Lord, I am just a child, just a child. I want you to teach me"?

Well if you are. If you really want to know the gospel here it is. Paul says in verse 20, "We are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God for..." Here it is. "For..." Here is the message of redemption with out eloquence, without grand oratory, without fine words. Here it is. "For he..." It starts with God. It ends with God. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. For he..." It begins with God. "Him." It ends with God. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made..." Oh, my what a blessing, "The righteousness of God." Not just righteous, but the righteousness of God in him.

Now there are three persons mentioned here. I want to introduce you to three persons. He...He...He hath made him. He. There is God the Father. He hath made him...him. There is Christ the son. To be sin for us...us. There is the sinner.

I introduce you to three persons. First of all, now, open your heart, open your mind. Do away with all your tradition. Approach it as if you were hearing it for the first time. He is God. He. Eternal life is to know the only true God. Isn't that what Christ said? He said, "And this is eternal life that they might know thee, the only true God."

David said, "As the deer panteth for the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee, the living God."

God is a very different being from what some people suppose. The God of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, the God of creation, the God of holy Scriptures, the God of all grace is not the God that most people are calling upon today. The God of all grace is not the god that some men make unto themselves and worship.

Let's ask ourselves the question right now. Do we worship the true and living God? Or do we worship a god of our imagination?

“Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself.”

The God of the Bible, the God of Holy Scriptures, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Isaiah and David, the God of eternal glory who has chosen to reveal himself in this book has three attributes, three great and grand attributes, three identifying attributes and they are all revealed right here in our text.

First of all, the God of heaven, the God of earth, the God of creation, the God of Scripture, the God of this Bible is a sovereign God. Turn to Psalms 135, Psalms 135. Listen to it. The God of the Scriptures has three great attributes that are revealed in our text. The first one is he is a sovereign God. He hath made him to be sin. He hath made him to be sin because he got the right to do it. He's got the power to do it. He's got the authority to do it and none can stay his hand. He made him to be sin.

Look at Psalms 135 verse five. “I know,” David said, “That the Lord is great, that our Lord is above all gods, the gods of men's imagination. Whatsoever the Lord pleased that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, in all deep places. Whatsoever the Lord pleased that's what he did.”

Turn to Isaiah 46. The God of the Scriptures is a sovereign God. Look at Isaiah 46 beginning with verse nine, Isaiah 46. “Remember the former things of old. I am God. There is none else. I am God. There is none like me. I declare the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done saying, ‘My counsel shall stand. I will do all my pleasure, calling a ravenous bird from the east, a man that executeth my counsel from a far country. Yea, I have spoken it. I will bring it to pass. I have purposed it. I will do it,’ God says.”

The God of Scriptures has absolute, unchangeable, infinite, total power and authority. He knows no rule but his own will. He knows no purpose, but his own purpose. He knows no glory but his own glory.

He says, “Can I not do with my own what I will?” He says he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. He doeth all things according to his will. “Father, thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent because it seemed good in thy sight.” The God of heaven and earth, the God of Scripture is a sovereign God.

And then, secondly, the God of heaven is a God of infinite justice. That he is a sovereign God is seen in his power to make Christ to be sin for us and that he is a God of infinite justice is seen in the fact that he spared not his own Son, but made us to be sin for us. His justice must be satisfied, even his divine sovereignty cannot act contrary to his divine justice.

The God of Scriptures is not the God who winks at sin. The God of Scriptures is not the God who is all love and no wrath. The God of Scriptures is not the God who is pacified by promises, ceremonies, rituals and deeds. The God of Scripture is a God whose holiness cannot be compromised. He says, "Shall not the judge of the earth do right?"

"He will by," he said, "no means clear the guilty."

He said, "The soul that sinneth it shall surely die."

The God of the Bible will not, cannot blot out sin without justice being satisfied. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The God of Scriptures is a sovereign God and he is a God of infinite justice. He cannot change. His justice, his righteousness, his holiness is as important as his sovereignty or his love.

But here is the third attribute. Watch it carefully. The God of heaven is a sovereign God. "He hath made him to be sin." The God of heaven is a God of infinite justice. He hath made him to be sin for us that his righteousness and his justice might be magnified and glorified. But what this. He is a God of grace. He is a God of mercy. "For God so loved...God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." God is love, love to its highest degree. He is plenteous in mercy. He delights to show mercy. As the judge of this earth he punishes sin. As the father of love he pardons sin. He is rich in mercy to all who call upon him for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

So we need to face this. We need to understand it. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us to comprehend it. Our God, the God of Scriptures, the God of creation is a sovereign God. Absolutely. "All authority," Christ said, "is given unto me. None can stay my hand nor say unto me what doest thou? He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this earth." That is so.

The fact that he is God tells us that. Who wants a God who cannot see, who cannot hear, whose arm is shortened that he cannot save? Who wants a God that cannot do his will? Who wants a God that depends upon his creature? Who wants a God whose will is stayed, whose hand is stayed, whose purpose is thwarted? Who wants a God who is defeated, disappointed, disillusioned, frustrated by men? No one can worship such a God. They may use him, but they can't worship him. We only worship at a sovereign throne, at an almighty throne. And the God of Scriptures is a sovereign God. As I said our text starts out with God and it ends with God. It starts with he and ends with him. And the preacher who is preaching the God of the Bible will preach a God of sovereignty. That's so. But he will also preach a God of infinite justice. God is holy.

Isaiah said, "When King Uzziah died I saw the Lord high and lifted up and the train filled the temple. His train filled the temple. And the cherubims and seraphims, the holy creatures of heaven hid their faces and covered their eyes and cried, 'holy, holy, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts.' God is holy."

You think God will wink at sin? If you think you can promise God that you will be better next week and he will wink at sin and overlook sin and cover sin and remit sin and pardon sin without that sin being paid for, you don't know the God of Scripture.

God will punish sin. God must punish sin, all sin, every sin. The judge of the earth shall do right. God's justice is an infinite justice. It reaches to the deepest recesses of the imagination. He says, "Every idle word shall be called to account in the judgment. Every secret deed. He must punish sin. But thank God he is a God of grace. He will be merciful. He will be gracious. He is plenteous in mercy. He delights to show mercy. He is going to forgive sin. He is going to pardon sin. He is going to put away sin. And he tells us how in a few moments.

You say, "How can God be just and also justifier?"

We'll find out in a minute. That's the gospel. How can God be holy and yet merciful? That's what we are going to find out. That's what Job asked. He said, "How can man be clean that's born of a woman? Behold the moon. It shineth not. The stars are not clean in his sight. How can man be clean that drinketh iniquity like the water? How can man be just with God? How can God be just and justify the ungodly? How can mercy and peace meet together? How can righteousness and truth kiss each other?"

Well we'll find out if you are interested.

But that doesn't change this first point. God is almighty. He is almighty God. And almighty means almighty. In the area of creation, in the area of providence, in the area of redemption he is almighty. And he is infinitely just. Nothing shall escape the microscope of his sovereignty and his justice. And he is inexhaustible grace, grace, grace, grace. You don't pay for it.

Well, here is the second person. Here is the Son. It says, "He hath made him, him, him." Here is the Son, the only begotten of the Father. Notice begotten, not made, being of the same substance as the Father, coequal, coexistent, coeternal.

Is the Father almighty? So is the Son. Is the Father infinite justice? So is the Son. Is the Father inexhaustible grace? So is the Son. Is the Father omnipresent? So is the Son because he is the image, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. He said, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father. I and the Father are one, not two, one."

Here is the only begotten. Here is a man, the son of Mary, very God of very God yet divine mystery, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. That's what the Bible said.

You said, "Preacher, you are preaching mysteries."

That's exactly right. Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh. And you don't figure that out. It is revealed to you. God was manifest in the flesh. The Word by whom the worlds were made, the Word who is one with the Father, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory. He was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin. He knew no sin. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was of the earth, earthy. God took him out of the earth and made him of the dust and breathed into him the breath of life. But the second Adam didn't come from the earth. He came from heaven. He is the Lord of heaven. And as we have born the image of the earthy so by his grace and his justice we shall bear the image of the heavenly. Here is the Son.

And then, thirdly, the third person I introduce you to is the sinner. He, almighty, infinite, immutable God hath made him, his beloved, his only begotten coequal, coexistent. He has made him to be sin for us, to be flesh. For whom? For us.

Here we are. Oh, have you got a high opinion of yourself? Here we are created in the image of God. That's right we were. Now dead in trespasses and sin. Here we are, us. We once walked with God and now we walk according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Here we are once a child of love, but now a child of wrath even as others. Here we are. We once loved light and truth and now we love darkness more than light because our deeds are evil. Here we are. We once communed with God. We saw his presence. We walked with him in the garden, but now we cry, "We will not have this man rule over us. Crucify him. Crucify him."

Here we are, once upright and holy created upright and righteous now in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. Here we are. We once knew God and now Christ comes and says, "You don't know me or my Father." Here we are. Once higher than the angels and now lower than the beasts. Here we are once king of creation, now servants of sin and sweat and sorrow. Here we are, once had freedom of the will now we are prisoners of a fallen nature. You cannot do the things that you would. The things that I would I do them not. The things I would not do, I do. I am a slave, a servant of a horrible master. Once filled with love, now filled with hate. Once filled with power, now nothing but weakness.

"Oh," Paul cried, "the exceeding sinfulness of sin."

So here the prisoner stands before the bar. Turn to Romans three and look at his condition.

Now we know the evidence has been overwhelming, the evidence from hell and heaven and earth have been brought in to be presented against us. It is a clear cut case of guilt. Romans 3:19, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith it saith to them who are under that law that every mouth may be stopped."

We don't have anything to say. We are standing before the throne of a sovereign God, a sovereign king an almighty ruler, infinite in justice. His piercing eye sees our imagination and our thoughts and our words and our deeds. Everything is open before him with whom we have to do. And the evidence is there and the law says guilty and our mouths are stopped. But thank God the God of sovereignty, the God of justice speaks and he says, "I will be merciful. I will be gracious. My Son, my Son will take your place. My Son will bear your sin."

Here is the gospel. Here is the glorious good news. He hath made him who knew no sin, who wasn't a part of this rebellion, who wasn't a part of this fall, who had no part of this guilt. He brought him down here and put him in our place. Here, take his place. I'll make you to be sin for him. You who knew no sin, you who had no sin, was not acquainted with sin, holiness personified, take his place. Take his place.

His nature was free from Adam's sin. He was the seed of woman.

Everyone of us can trace our birth back to Adam, not Christ. He was a seed of woman. His life was free from sin. His lips never spoke an idle word. His heart never harbored an evil thought. His eye never looked with pride. His hand was never lifted in anger. His feet never walked in paths of sin. He came down here in the flesh as a human being and was tried and tempted and tested in every point, but he knew no sin. He was a stranger to sin. He saw it. He heard it. But he never knew it. And sin never knew him.

"Sin, you have nothing in me."

And the Father spoke and said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And he was made sin. He actually took our place before the holy law as a human being and kept that law. He actually was numbered with the transgressors before the judgment bar of God. Our sins were laid on him. The Scripture says he bore our sins in his body on the tree.

Look at our text again. "And that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It doesn't say that we might be made righteous only. It is not just a veneer of righteousness. In Christ, in Christ the believer is in the sight of the Father pure, holy, without blame, unblamable, as pure as Christ. We are the righteousness of God. What a treasure.

Turn to Jude verse 24. Now listen to this. Jude verse 24. Listen to it. "Now unto him, now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you..." Look at that word. "Faultless, faultless." That's righteousness, isn't it? Faultless. We are not just righteous. We are not just holy. We are not just good. We are not just acceptable. We are in Christ the righteousness of God. God himself is righteous. That's how holy it is. That's how pure it is. It's his righteousness, faultless. Where? Not just before your friends or before the church or before the community. Faultless before the presence of his glory. Faultless.

He wore my crown of thorns that I might wear his crown of glory. He took my nakedness, my rags, that I might wear his royal robe. He bore my shame that I might wear his honor. He endured my suffering that I might have his joy. He died my death that I might live his life. He went into the grave that I might come forth. He ascended to glory where he pleads his wounds.

“Father you have nothing in them because my wounds, by my stripes they are healed. Your justice has nothing in them. Your law has nothing to demand of them. My wounds, my stripes by these they are healed. He in his sovereignty in his justice, oh in his love, hath made him at his right hand and his beloved Son to be sin for us who knew no sin. He made him to bear all the consequences, the results of God’s wrath and God’s judgment and God’s justice that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. The sinless became sinful that the sinful might be sinless. And this is mine by faith.

Turn to 1 John five and I will close. But I want to read this Scripture before I close. In 1 John five verse 11, “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in his Son and he that hath the Son of God hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life and these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God. This is your assurance that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may keep on believing on the name of the Son of God.”

*Our Father, we thank thee for the Word, for the richness, the blessedness, precious promises of thy Word. We have been made partakers of this like precious faith. In Christ we have all things. We don’t understand all the mysteries of this Word, about justice, thy righteousness, thy holiness, thy sovereignty and especially thy grace. Why should he love me so? But we receive it by faith. We believe. We know thou art almighty. We know thou art a God of infinite justice and we know that thou art inexhaustible love and grace. We know that Christ is the only substitute, the only sin offering. He has been made for us a redemption, a ransom, a sin offering. By faith we believe it. Oh God, help our unbelief and increase our faith for the glory of our Redeemer. For it is in his name we pray. Amen.*