

Faith Comes Hearing

Romans 10:17

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¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

As we begin our New Year with a Sunday, what a great opportunity to gather as a church and worship our Savior Jesus Christ.

Last night, we saw in our prayer meeting that Paul tells the Philippian church to strain or reach forward. Paul tells the Philippians that his own desire is to “forget what lies behind and strain forward to the upward call in Jesus Christ”. (Philippians 3:13)

And how are we to move forward? By faith!

A recent article caught my attention:

On May 8, 2022 one of the wealthiest men or perhaps the wealthiest men alive tweeted today, “If I die under mysterious circumstances, it’s been nice knowin ya,”.

When one of his now 122 million followers responded that this man should consider whether there is a “creator of this world” prior to his death, he wrote back “Thank you for the blessing, but I’m ok with going to hell, if that is indeed my destination, since the vast majority of all humans ever born will be there.”

I don’t know if this wealthy man thought deeply about his reply. I don’t know if he said this in a “tongue-in-check” kind of way or impulsively. I don’t know what his philosophical or theological background is but what he writes is rather extraordinary. And his reply, he admits to at least *three* things – he appears to believe there is a hell, he appears to believe in some after afterlife, and lastly he appears to think that majority of human beings are going to hell.

Well, I am beginning to wonder if this man wants to be a theologian. And I have some correction to offer Biblically starting from the last statement. Musk says that the “majority of humans are going to hell”. He is close. The Bible says that “*the soul who sins shall die*”. (Ezekiel 18:20). And there is not one who does not sin. “*Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins*”

Ecclesiastes 7:20. And after death comes judgment. “..it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” Hebrews 9:27

Jesus talked about hell many times in the Bible.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire” Matthew 5:22

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell” Matthew 5:27-29

So, when someone says they are ok with going to hell, that is a very tragic statement. I hope they don’t mean what they are saying. Maybe they need to define what kind of a hell they are talking about. Jesus himself said hell is a place of unquenchable or inextinguishable fire (Mark 9:43). No one should say they want to be in a lake of fire and sulfur.

Jesus has some very strong words for some of the religious leaders of his day.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous,³⁰ saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’³¹ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?” Matthew 23:29-33

When thousands of people of people were gathered Jesus spoke about hell.

“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.⁵ But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell” Luke 12:5

So, Yes God has the power to give life, take life, to judge and to cast into hell. God did not spare even the angels when they sinned. God cast them into hell (2 Peter 2:4).

God is whom we must fear, honor and worship.

But here is the thing.

God does not take pleasure in the death of sinners or wicked people.

God is longsuffering. God is grieved when we as his image bearers sin and rebel against God. Don't you think those who are made in image of God ought to know their Maker?

So, yes no one is righteous before God. All have sinned before God. The penalty of sin is death. The bad news is that man is in a constant of rebellion against God. Either actively or passively. Either through denial or acknowledgement.

But there is the good news!

God is not willing that any should die but all should turn from their own ways to God.

God requires that we put our faith in the person of Jesus Christ.

And how does this faith come?

Is it natural? Is it automatic?

Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of Christ.

The word of Christ is the good news. It is the report that Jesus Christ, the Son of God accomplished salvation through his death on a cross.

The good news must be proclaimed and received. God has made us in such that he uses our auditory senses to receive the good news.

And this faith leads to obedience. To commitment. To submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith and obedience cannot be separated.

Paul writes in Romans chapter one verse five that *“through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ”*.

Louie Zamperini was an Olympic runner. He was also a prisoner of war. And after his release he was a war hero. His life was full of reckless living and hatred for those who had imprisoned him. And as a young man he wandered into a tent in LA in 1949.

There he heard the good news from Billy Graham. The first day he was very stubborn. But the second day he went back and this is his account *“I dropped to my knees and for the first time in my life truly humbled myself before the Lord. I asked him to forgive me for not having kept the promises I’d made during the war, and for my sinful life. I made no excuses. I did not rationalize, I did not blame. He had said, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” so I took him at his word, begged for his pardon, and asked Jesus to come into my life.”*

Louie who was once bitter and hated his captors freely forgave them. Why? Because his experienced forgiveness and joy from Jesus Christ. He put his faith in Jesus Christ and fully committed his life to Jesus until his death. He was a faithful husband.

Paul writes in Romans chapter 10 verse twelve and thirteen

“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **Faith Comes By Hearing.** Romans 10:17

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. Compared to other faiths and religions, what is distinctive about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and putting our faith in him? Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 3:5, Romans 3:20, 28, 1 Corinthians 1:28-31, Acts 4:12

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. What are some implications of putting faith in Jesus Christ? 1 Corinthians 15:3, Luke 9:23, Hebrews 5:9, John 1:12, 1 John 5:2, Ephesian 5:6-8
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: Are there things that compete in your love and affection for Jesus Christ? How can you follow him and love him more this year?