

“‘Eh?’ How’s Your Hearing?”—Romans 10:17

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “‘Eh?’ How’s Your Hearing?”, is Romans 10:17 → *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“Eh?” “Huh?” “What’s that you said?” “Pardon me?” Maybe you’ve heard these expressions one too many times while trying to communicate with someone. Depending upon your relationship with the person your response or reaction to such phrases may try your patience to the max. You may think to yourself, “Is he really that hard of hearing or is he just not paying attention?” You may repeat yourself at a louder volume, sometimes getting a reaction such as, “You don’t have to yell, ya know!” However, your patience may finally hit its breaking point when you ask a question, the person immediately says “What?”, and, while repeating your question, he answers before you even get to the middle of your sentence. At that point, he says, “Eh?” while you say, “Ugh!”

It really is overwhelming to think of the amount of variables which challenge your efforts to convey information in your communication. External things such as noise, other people and activities around you can distract your hearing and listening capabilities (e.g. “squirrel!”).

Cognitive elements such as familiarity with, the terminology of or simply interest in the subject being discussed can make it harder to pay attention. Even the speed with which people talk can prove challenging for the brain to process. Throw an “accent” of some kind into the mix and you’ve got “Eh?”

What about the emotional dynamics which come into play with communication? Information conveyed in anger, frustration, hurt and so forth can affect its reception on the other end. Likewise, emotions such as grief, sorrow, guilt and worry can skew the information received or totally hinder the ability to process it. Such emotions can affect conveying the information clearly as well. Of course, there is always the struggles in communication with the physical breakdown of your hearing capabilities. All of these elements and many more can cause one to say, “Eh?” with a lack of hearing or understanding.

Our text speaks about the connection of faith with hearing. It says that *faith comes from hearing*. In the context Paul declares that *everyone, no matter what nationality, who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved* (cf. Romans 10:14-13). Then, in Romans 10:14-15 he asks some importance, logical, rhetorical questions: *How then will people 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? And how are they to preach unless they*

are sent? Not only is the open, public, verbal confession of *Jesus is Lord* important for your salvation (cf. Romans 10:9-10) but its expression in the presence of others is important for *faith* to come *from hearing* for them as well. If the Gospel—*the good news* of forgiveness of sins and eternal life in the atoning work of Jesus Christ—is not confessed verbally how will anyone ever hear it?

God's grace demands that faith (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9), your eternal life (cf. Romans 6:23), the forgiveness of your sins and being righteous in God's sight (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21) are pure gift. Thus, you do not hatch out faith by thinking hard about your need for it. Neither is faith created through a process of being convinced after Yahweh "proves" Himself to you by meeting your criteria for validity. Faith is not the ability to process information intellectually. To call upon *the name of the Lord* Jesus is an act of faith and faith is given only by the Holy Spirit. working *through the word of Christ*. You come to faith in the Lord when you hear news of Jesus.

The *hearing* to which our text refers is much more than simply words about Jesus bouncing off of your eardrums and going through a reasoning process. In the verse before our text Paul states that *not all* have *obeyed the gospel* (cf. Romans 10:16). Was it because they had *not heard?* In the verse following our text Paul says: *Indeed they have heard, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to*

the ends of the world.” (cf. Romans 10:18) As *the word of faith* (cf. Romans 10:8) is proclaimed there are still many who are hearing but not believing. This is precisely why Jesus so many times said: *He who has ears to hear, let him hear* (cf. Matthew 11:15; 13:9,43; Luke 8:8; 14:35; Revelation 2:7,11,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9).

The greatest obstacle to the communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ is sin, whether it has to do with failing to *confess it with your mouth* or others failing to listen when it is proclaimed. If there are external factors which come into play with the communication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ they are created by the devil, who will use anything to hinder people from speaking and hearing it. He knows the power of the Holy Spirit to convict you of your sins **and** gives you faith in the atoning work of Jesus so you can be totally forgiven and go to heaven. He knows the power of Jesus’ resurrection to bring you out of the darkness, stuck and enslaved to your sin. He knows that *the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword*, which will discern those sinful *thoughts and intentions of your heart* (cf. Hebrews 4:12), bringing you to call *on the name of the Lord* in repentance and faith to *be saved*.

Rebellious rejection of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is because of bad hearing spiritually. Think about it: God continually holds out the forgiveness of sins accomplished for everyone in the Person & Work of

Jesus Christ. That means your burden of perfect obedience to God laws is lifted. That means you no longer have to carry the burden of guilt for your wrongdoings in sin. That means you can live with a peace in the midst of a world in complete turmoil because you know Who is Lord over it all. That means you can have a totally new perspective of love, of other people, of compassion, of kindness and so forth. What a deal! Why would anyone turn down such gifts?

It happens when hearing about these blessings becomes muddled because of the satanic delusion in sin. Ephesians 4:18 describes those who turn up their noses at such blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ *as darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, **due to their hardness of heart***. There is no flaw with God's Word, although such *hardness of heart* in sin tries to make it seem that way. If your heart is hardened in sin your hearing becomes insensitive to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit never gives up striving to break through such poor spiritual hearing in satanic delusion. He does so through us Christians who are *not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes* (cf. Romans 1:16). He does so as we continue to bring God's Word to bear in the daily vocations, tasks and interactions with others. Jesus described this continual work of the Holy Spirit in John 16:8-11, saying He convicts *the world concerning sin and*

righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me. Christ has done all that is necessary for the total forgiveness of your sins. The Holy Spirit convicts *the world . . . concerning righteousness*, He says, *because I go to the Father.* Christ has accomplished everything necessary to present you righteous in God's presence forever. The Holy Spirit convicts *the world . . . concerning judgment*, He says, *because the ruler of this world is judged.* Satan, along with all his efforts to hinder your *hearing through the word of Christ* in faith, is a defeated enemy.

So, how is your hearing? Are you hearing the conviction of God's Word upon your sin only to be driven **away** from *the word of Christ* in satanic delusion? Or are you hearing the conviction of God's Word upon your sin to be driven **to** *the word of Christ* by the Holy Spirit's power? We have gathered in this place today to hear: to hear the absolution, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins; to hear God's Word read for building us up in faith and obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit; to receive forgiveness of sins in the sacraments based upon hearing the promise of God's written Word. Having heard, we go out speaking, confessing *the word of Christ* and confessing *that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (cf. Philippians 2:11). Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,

keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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