

Text: Rm 10.16-17

In light of having quizzing each Sunday of December, I thought we should have a communion service today.

I also decided to go back to a message about salvation from Romans 10. I am incorporating a lot of notes from when we preached through this passage in 2013, with some adaptation.

A question comes up about salvation when we are trying to work out the details. One aspect of the teaching has to do with the depravity of man.

We sometimes use the term "Total Depravity." What does it mean?

- It doesn't mean that every man is as bad as he could be
- It does mean that every man is a sinner, has a propensity for sin, that he likes sin, that, if left to himself, he would sin
- Some people will say that it means that a man cannot even respond to a gospel message by himself, God must give him the faith to believe.
- I wouldn't say it that way. I would say that man, left to himself, will not turn to God. He is a sinner and likes it. He needs something to lead him to turn to God but left to himself he will not.

The reason I say this has to do with the plain teaching of the Bible. I agree that man is a sinner and is depraved. But the Bible tells me that there is something that produces faith. That's what our message is about today.

Read Rm 10.14-17

Proposition: By the preaching of the gospel, God made it possible for sinners to believe.

I. The importance of hearing

A. The place of hearing in the context

1. The 'series of salvation' (14-15)

- a. Call follows believing
- b. Believing follows hearing
- c. Hearing comes from a preacher
- d. The preacher is sent with a message

There are lots of 'audible' words in this series: *message, preaching, hearing.*

2. The accessibility section (6-9)
 - a. Righteousness based on faith *speaks* (6)
 - b. What is it [righteousness] *saying* (8 – note present tense)
 - c. The *word* is near you (8)
 - d. The *word* of faith (8)
 - e. Which we are *preaching* (8)

B. The emphasis on hearing in our text (16-17)

1. Did not heed *good news* (16)
2. Who has believed our *report* [lit., 'hearing'] (16)
3. Faith comes from *hearing* (17)
4. *Hearing* by the *word* of Christ (17)

The point of this exercise is to show how much stress the passage is putting on the idea of hearing the good news.

- You can't be saved from your sins without hearing the good news.

C. Faith is not content-less

1. When we preach the gospel, we aren't just calling people to a 'healthier way of life'; 'a better lifestyle'; or even 'a relationship with God'
2. When we preach the gospel, we are declaring
 - a. Human need: you are a sinner who cannot save yourself
 - b. Divine provision: God sent his Son to save you from your sins by taking your penalty in your place so that you could take his life in his place
 - c. Personal imperative: You must call on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved

When someone hears this content, they are now able to be saved — they could never be saved without hearing it.

II. The failure of hearing

A. Specifically, the failure of Israel at hearing the good news

1. The passage is much preoccupied with Israel (see v. 1-3, 19-21)
2. The quotation is from Isaiah where he is talking about Israel (Isa 53.1)
3. The record of Israel is one of failing to listen to God's messengers
 - a. Rebellion of Korah (Num 16.3)
 - b. Complaint of Ezekiel (Ezek 20.49)
 - c. Opposition to Amos (Amos 7.10-13)
 - d. The warning of Jeremiah (Jer 13.15-17)
 - e. The blasphemy of Judah (Jer 44.16-19)

These are just a few examples.

When Jesus came, they wouldn't listen to him either.

B. The nature of this failure: disobedience

1. The word in our text is 'heed' – it is 'obey' in the KJV
2. The word has a root idea of hearing – “properly, of one who on a knock at the door comes to listen who it is (the duty of the porter), Acts 12:13”¹
3. Basic meaning: “*to hearken to a command, i. e. to obey, be obedient unto, submit to*”²
4. Applications:
 - a. It is not that they *could not hear*
 - b. It is not that no message was preached
 - c. It is not that no messenger was sent (see vv. 14-15)
 - d. Here it is: they *would not* hear

Mt 23.37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

¹ Joseph Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (International Bible Translators (IBT), Inc., 1889), BibleWorks, v.8.

² Ibid.

III. The power of hearing

A. The problem is depravity

1. The doctrine of Total Depravity

- a. Calvinists and Arminians both teach that man is totally depraved
- b. That doesn't mean men are all as bad as they could be
- c. But that all men are bad and predisposed to sin
- d. But even more than that, man in his natural state cannot even believe the gospel

2. Two different theological solutions to the problem of depravity

a. Calvinism

- 1) Irresistible grace: God will enable those he calls to be saved
- 2) Priority of regeneration: God regenerates men so that they can believe (regeneration – new life – precedes faith)

Not all Calvinists teach this second point.

No support for this in Scripture

b. Arminianism

- 1) Prevenient grace: Because of man's inability, God simply goes ahead of men (anticipates, precedes) to enable all men to believe
- 2) Nowhere taught in Scripture

B. The power of the word [let's go to our text – what does it say?]

1. Faith comes by hearing

a. The Bible teaches us that we are saved *through* faith

Faith is the agency or vehicle or channel through which salvation flows from God to us.

b. The source of faith is not human ability

c. The source of faith is not divine intervention [directly]

d. The source of faith is the *hearing*

2. Faith comes by hearing a specific message: the word of Christ
 - a. The word in our text is not λογος – the whole council of God
 - b. The word in our text is ρημα – a specific, individual word
 - c. This is a specific word about Christ, the only one who can save you from your sins
 - d. The same word is used twice in 10.8 – in the quotation and in Paul's comment
 - 1) The ρημα that is near
 - 2) The ρημα of faith, the word of faith
 - e. What is that word of faith? (9)
 - 1) Confess Jesus as Lord
 - 2) Believe in your heart that God raised Christ
3. Theological considerations
 - a. It isn't irresistible grace – many people do not heed, even if they have heard (16a)
 - b. It isn't unbiblical 'prevenient' grace
 - c. But it is the 'hearing grace' that comes from the 'preaching grace'
 - 1) The word of God is a gift to men
 - 2) Preachers are a gift from God to men (preachers generic, not just pastors)
 - 3) The Holy Spirit attends and convicts
 - 4) And the one who hears has a precious gift from God that some people never have: he hears the gospel
 - 5) And now he must respond: the power is in the word, it is near him, it is in his mouth... if it is in his heart...

Conclusion:

Proposition: By the preaching of the gospel, God made it possible for sinners to believe.