

**Faith Comes by Hearing God's Word**  
Romans 10:8-18, Sunday after Epiphany  
January 10, 2010

Beloved of the Lord..... This past Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup> was Epiphany, that day in which we remember the appearance of the Wise Men who worshiped the baby Jesus. They told Herod, "We have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him." The worship of these Gentile men remind us that Jesus came to save both Jew and Gentile alike, and that He yet shines like a light into this world of darkness, "for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." Today let us learn to call upon Him and confess His holy name not only with our lips but also with our heart, for God does not accept the outward and external worship of the hypocrite, but whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, through faith in the heart, such shall be saved.

I. The Word is nigh thee. When the Bible says "the Word is nigh thee", this speaks of the Word of faith which continually lives in each believing heart. The saving Gospel message of Jesus Christ continually lives within and is ever present with each believer by faith. When we then hear the preaching of the Gospel from the pulpit, or hear His message of forgiveness in the readings at church, or read our Bible at home, that Gospel faith which lives within assents or agrees with the external Word we have just heard with our ears or read with our eyes, that word of faith "which we preach." Faith WITHIN time and time again says "Amen" whenever it hears and receive the Gospel from WITHOUT, and is likewise comforted.

There is then an inward testimony of the Holy Spirit FOR "the Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." God's Spirit lives within. For example, quite often when I get ready to write a sermon, I read the text and think to myself "Oh!, there is so much doctrine here, so much comfort, and the Lord has much to say. Where do I begin and what do I do? This is when I stop and pray. When I pray I ask the Lord that He in mercy will make evident to me the main points of the text, especially those Words which He wants the people of Good Shepherd to hear. I am in no way wise enough on my own to know what the sheep are in need of but I do know the Lord knows just what you need. Therefore "Lord, please keep my flesh

out of this sermon and give me the Words you want them to hear." Quite often when I reach this point in prayer suddenly certain verses come to mind and they come so quickly I must quickly end the prayer and begin to write. Yesterday in the midst of my prayer the verse that rose to the surface was "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God". Followed quickly after this verse came "the Word is nigh thee" Truly that is how the Holy Ghost works. It is not that we hear His voice, or go into a trance or see visions, etc. Bbut His Word does come to our mind and is uttered from our heart for the Word lives within us and the Holy Ghost brings all these things to our remembrance. Jesus said in John 14:26, "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

II. Those who call on His name shall be saved.

Today's text fits well with epiphany in that we see the universality of the Gospel, His desire that all men be saved, whether Jew, Gentile, or Greek. Verse 13 declares, "WHOSOEVER shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." This is indeed God's promise to every broken sinner who seeks to be forgiven – WHOEVER he may be. Since Jesus gave His life a ransom for all men, no exceptions, and rose from the dead for the justification of all men, no exceptions, WHOSOEVER calls upon His name shall be saved "for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call on Him." The rich treasure of His forgiveness is already there, bought and paid for by the blood of Christ, but you must believe the treasure is yours in your heart by faith if it will do you any good. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Let us now speak of what the heart believes and the mouth declares on the side of man, since the fall. Does our mouth always agree with our heart? Indeed it is a sin to say anything with our mouth but not believe it in our heart, both on the side of the law and the Gospel. For example, if we confess we are sinners worthy of eternal damnation but do not believe it in our heart, we have just lied to God and that lie alone truly merits eternal damnation. If we tell God with our lips we

are heartily sorry for our sins but we are not heartily sorry in heart, again we have lied to God and that sin also merits damnation. On the side of the Gospel it is no different. When God through the Word declares the truth of the Gospel to men, that “Christ died for ALL” and “God so loved the WORLD” and “WHOSOEVER believeth on Him hath everlasting life”, men should take God’s Word as true and believe it with all their heart. To not believe the Gospel, to not believe all sins through Christ are forgiven, is likewise to call God a liar. Hence Isaiah said, “Lord who hath believed our report?” To not believe the Gospel is to not obey the Gospel, for the words ALL, require all hearts to believe. It is then a sin not to believe the Gospel and it is also a sin not to believe one is forgiven of all sins for Jesus’ sake, for God really did through Christ save us and all men, and He only wants us and all men to believe.

III. Faith cometh by hearing. Having spoken of man’s common sin where he so often speaks or confesses one thing with His mouth, but believes another in his heart, let us speak of how God speaks, and how He means every Word He speaks from the heart. First, we know that though all men by sin deserve nothing but God’s wrath and punishment, God was moved by grace to send and give His only-begotten Son for our salvation. Jesus then comes forth from the bosom of the Father, the heart of God’s mercy. His work on the cross then turned God’s heart, bringing about full reconciliation. From this reconciled heart of God then the Gospel proceeds or comes forth and the Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father and the Son is the teacher of the Gospel Word. Thus when it comes to the preaching of the Gospel and also the Means of Grace, Holy Baptism and the Lord Supper, what is going on? This is the mouth of God proclaiming unto our soul what has occurred in God’s heart, namely reconciliation. The Gospel then is God’s confession of the mouth His reconciliation of heart. In the Gospel God speaks from His heart, telling us of Jesus who with a willing heart gave His life a ransom for many. When the preaching of the Gospel occurs, from the heart of God comes the Word of God. His Word declares His heart. The Holy Spirit travels through the Word, is carried in the Word and though He speaks the Word to our ears, He is seeking to bring the Word into our heart. FAITH COMETH BY

## HEARING AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD.

What is faith? Faith is a reconciled heart toward God, knowing that He through Christ has reconciled Himself with us. “We love Him because He first loved us.” In a way faith is simply an echo of God’s love. When the gospel is proclaimed, the Gospel of peace and glad tidings as our text says, it is like Christ standing and shining upon a mountain top. In the most sweet and beautiful voice Jesus the Son of God, as the Lamb of God is declaring to the whole world “Salvation is free for I am your Savior! God with man is now reconciled, go in peace, thy sins be forgiven thee.” His loud voice goes and is sent forth through all the earth, reaching the ears of sinners everywhere and many believe it and take it to heart. What is faith? It is the echo of God’s love. Jesus from the mountaintop declares “Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace”, and our heart with joy echos its response “My sins are forgiven, and now I can go in peace.” “For with the heart man believe unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Jesus it the “Lord our Righteousness!”

When your faith speaks dear Christian, your mouth can only utter what your heart already believes. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be asved.” That is God’s sincere and certain promise to you! That is also why you should sincerely listen to your minister when he preaches the Gospel, for in the Gospel God’s heart is speaking to your heart, strengthening your faith. In the Gospel He gives you His full assurance you are yet His precious child, even the apple of His eye, and the hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore keep, stay, and remain in the one true faith. Hear God’s Word regularly in church and faithfully receive His Sacrament that your faith may be fed. By the strength of this Gospel you will find all the strength you need to fight against sin “for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord” such shall be saved. Amen.