

Saved: God's Plan of Salvation

Week 2: Hearing the Gospel: Faith Comes by Hearing -- Romans 10:13–17

A letter sits unopened on the kitchen table. It carries news that would change everything, news of a debt forgiven, a loved one found, an inheritance waiting. But as long as it stays sealed, nothing changes. The good news is true whether or not it is read, yet it does no good until it is heard. Paul knows this. He has just poured out his heart for people he loves, longing for them to be saved, and now he traces the path that news must travel to reach a human heart. It is a simple path, almost startling in its plainness. Before anyone can call on the Lord, they must believe. Before they can believe, they must hear. Before they can hear, someone must tell them. And before anyone tells them, someone must send.

This is how God has chosen to save people. Not by whispering directly into every heart, not by writing the gospel across the sky, but through the spoken and written word carried by ordinary messengers. “Faith comes from hearing,” Paul says, “and hearing through the word of Christ.” Faith is not a feeling that rises up out of nowhere, and it is not a leap into the dark. It is a response to a message, a trust that is born when the truth about Jesus reaches the ear and lands in the heart. The seed of faith is the word, and where the word is not sown, faith does not grow.

There is something humbling and something thrilling in this. Humbling, because it means none of us came to faith on our own. Somebody told us. A parent, a preacher, a friend, a faithful soul who opened a Bible and opened their mouth. Thrilling, because it means the feet of those who carry this news are called beautiful by God Himself. The message has not changed and the need has not changed. People are still waiting at kitchen tables, the letter still unopened, and God still works through people willing to carry it to them.

So this week we ask where faith actually comes from, and what we are doing with the word that produces it. Are we feeding our own faith on the word of Christ, or starving it on everything else? And are we content to keep the good news sealed and safe, or will we let it travel through us to someone who has not yet heard? Read these verses slowly. Listen for the sound of beautiful feet.

Group Discussion: Paul says, “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (v. 17). In a world overflowing with voices, opinions, and information, why is it significant that saving faith comes specifically through the word of Christ and not through experience, intuition, or sincerity alone? What happens to faith when it is cut off from its source?

Personal Reflection: Think back to how you first heard the gospel. Who carried it to you, and what would your life look like now if no one had bothered to tell you? Is there someone in your life right now who has never really heard, and what holds you back from being the one who tells them?

Study Questions

1. Paul concludes, “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (v. 17). According to this verse, where does saving faith come from, and what does this teach us about the role of Scripture and the gospel message in bringing a person to salvation?
2. Faith feeds on the word of Christ, and it grows thin where that word is scarce. Be honest about what you are actually feeding your soul each day. What voices and inputs are shaping your heart most, and is the word of Christ among them or crowded out by them?
3. Trace the chain Paul lays out in verses 14 and 15: calling, believing, hearing, preaching, sending. Why does each link depend on the one before it, and what does this reveal about how God has chosen to bring the gospel to the world?
4. Paul calls the feet of gospel messengers “beautiful” (v. 15). Whether or not you feel qualified, God has placed people in your life who may never hear unless you speak. Who are they, and what is one specific step you could take this week to carry the message to even one of them?
5. Paul quotes the promise, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (v. 13). What does it mean to “call on the name of the Lord,” and how does the rest of the New Testament fill out that phrase so that it means more than simply saying words?
6. There may be a gap between the truth you have heard and the response you have actually made. Have you yourself called on the name of the Lord in the way Scripture describes, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized into Christ? If not, what is keeping you from answering the call you have already heard?
7. In verse 16 Paul says, “they have not all obeyed the gospel.” Why does Paul speak of the gospel as something to be obeyed and not only believed, and what does this tell us about the kind of response the good news is meant to produce?
8. It is possible to hear the truth clearly and still leave it lying on the table unobeyed. Where in your life right now have you heard God’s word plainly but not yet acted on it? What would obedience look like this week in that specific area?
9. Paul roots the whole chain in “the word of Christ” (v. 17), and elsewhere insists there is salvation in no other name. If faith comes only through hearing this particular message about this particular Lord, what does that mean for the millions who have never heard, and what responsibility does it place on those of us who have? How does this guard us against the popular idea that sincerity in any belief is enough?
10. Look back across this passage. It moves from a God who sends, to a messenger who speaks, to a hearer who believes and calls on the Lord and is saved. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this truth. Is He calling you to feed your own faith more deeply on His word, to obey something you have heard, or to become a sender or a messenger to someone who has not yet heard?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 1:16, the gospel as the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes; Acts 22:16, calling on His name in baptism to wash away sins; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–8, the danger of not obeying the gospel; James 1:21–25, receiving the implanted word and being a doer of it; Acts 8:30–38, Philip preaching Jesus and the response of faith and baptism.