

## **Hear, Heed And Have Life**

HN/SS 26/09/04 am

Reading: Ezekiel 18:19-32, Ephesians 2

Study: John 5:24

Psalms: 130, 25:1-5, 25:16-22, 28:7-9

When I say to you 9/11 what comes to your mind? Most people especially Americans would immediately recall that terrorist inferno that engulfed the towers in New York City killing thousands of people. One of the images etched upon my mind is that of the person jumping out of a window and falling to his death – even as the building crumbled around him.

Maybe you have seen similar images before but often it is with firemen standing below holding a safety net. They spread out the net and then call to the person standing in the window of the burning building – JUMP they say. Jump to save your life. Then there is the tense moment. Will that person jump. Will he trust the firemen to save him? They keep calling. The person hears but will he jump, will he heed the words that he hears?

*Amen, Amen* said Jesus as he solemnly continues to address the Jews who had charged him with blasphemy for making himself equal with God. He was explaining to them his relationship with God the Father and the implications of this truth to them. He had already told them they could not honour the Father – something they claimed they were doing – if they did not accept Jesus and honour him as God the Son.

In this verse before us today, he applies this truth to them. He tells them what it means **to them** that God the Son has come into the world and was standing before them. He was not talking abstract theology here. It was a matter of life and death.

He sets before them two paths – the way of life and the way of death. His words are clear and unequivocal- not I think it is like this or maybe this is so. Either you are dead or you are alive – that is true physically and it is true spiritually. And just as you can pinch yourself and say yes I am alive in the body, so you can examine your heart and know that you are alive spiritually. So listen to the words of Jesus Christ for they are life.

*These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in his name (20:31).*

### **Hear**

What is the first thing Jesus said – *hears my word*. Hearing is essential if people are to believe. Yet it is very difficult task to get people to hear. Just ask the politicians today. If they want to be elected, they have to be heard. They spend thousands of dollars on advertising; they walk miles door knocking and meeting people. Because they want people to hear what their policies are.

The words of Jesus must be heard if people are to believe. *How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard. And how shall they hear without a preacher* (Romans 10:14). We do not have many people here listening to the words of Jesus this morning. People are too busy. They are too busy making money or spending it for money is their god. Nevertheless we have a solemn duty to proclaim the word of God that people might hear. Do we take this responsibility seriously – in our families, in our community, in our workplace, in our world.

The Jews had Jesus standing before them. They had the messenger and the message standing before them in the person of Jesus Christ. But Jesus also called 12 apostles whom he trained and sent out into the towns and villages of the country. He sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. We have the gospel, the message of God, to proclaim to a fallen world.

People must hear the name of Jesus; they must hear his word. Jesus had told them who he is. He told them that he gives life and that he judges all men. He will tell them more shortly but in this verse he is concerned that they hear and they believe his word.

### **Heed**

Those who hear must heed. That person standing in the window of the burning building will not be saved just by hearing the call of the firemen. He will not be saved if his father standing next to him jumps. He must hear and heed the call himself.

He must believe the words he hears. He must put his trust in the firemen holding the net below him. There are people who sit in church week after week hearing the word of the Lord but they do not believe. They do not trust the one who speaks in the words of the Bible. They think they are doing the right thing, they are doing a good thing coming to church, but they do not heed the word they hear.

It is as if they are on the window ledge saying what lovely things the firemen are saying – they have such strong voices, they look so good in their uniforms. They hear but do not listen to the message. Of course there are those who will stand in the window criticising the language the firemen use or the clothes they are wearing. They are not saying please, they are not using the right syntax. How foolish you say. Well, what do you say about people who stay away from church because of the form of the suffix used on verbs?

*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16)*. The Philippian jailer had heard Paul and Silas praying and singing praises to God in their prison cell. He had heard the word of God. What must I do to be saved he cried out. Believe said Paul, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. *And immediately he and all his family were baptized.*

Jesus told the Jews, men who claimed they believed in God to *believe in him who sent me*. This was quite subtle. For again Jesus is telling them if they truly believe in God they must also believe in him – for God sent him into the world.

The Jews did not really believe in God anyway even if they claimed to. Self-righteousness and trusting in the law for salvation precludes trusting in God. If you want to trust in yourself and your good works you will end up like that poor man leaping out of the window on 9/11. You have no more power to save yourself than that man did as he plummeted downwards.

### **Eternal Life**

Jesus promised everlasting life/eternal life to whoever *believes in him who sent me-* (lit. life into the ages). We have heard these words before – 3:16. Jesus also said *this is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent* (17:3).

When you believe in Jesus, when you believe that he died in your place, and that his blood was shed for the forgiveness of your sins, then you have eternal life. You are born again and the new life you have is eternal life.

Our text makes it clear that you have this life now – **has** everlasting life. This new life is not only a life that continues into the ages – i.e. beyond physical death. It is also a new quality of life. We are given the Holy Spirit when we are born anew – how else are our dead hearts quickened! *He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in you* (Romans 8:11). We live with a new direction of life, being led by the Spirit of God and not the sinful nature.

Along with the gift of eternal life, Jesus tells us of two other consequences of belief in him.

### **Has Passed From Death to Life**

Again note the tense – **has** passed. The one who believes in Jesus Christ is no longer dead but alive. Why does he say they were dead? The Pharisees did not like being called dead and neither do people today. But the word of God says that you are dead in your trespasses and sins. *Even when we were dead in trespasses God made us alive together with Christ* (Galatians 2:5).

What a tremendous verse – we are made alive in Christ. That is just what Jesus has been saying. He is the one who gives life. Believe in him and you will have life. Though born dead in sin you will be made alive in Christ.

*He who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?* That is the question Jesus asks.

### **Not Come Into Judgment**

Some translate this word as condemnation, which means negative judgment. The word essentially means separation or division – the sheep and the goats. *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ* but the one who believes in him will not be condemned – why? Because he believes Christ died for his sin and rose again for his justification. Christ took the penalty for his sin.

*There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1).*

So are you alive or are you dead? Simple question but a very solemn and serious question. If you think that keeping the law will bring life then let me urge you to think again. For it is written *by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified* (Galatians 1:16).

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