

Faith comes by Hearing

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Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 0 0] Now the passage that we read from the book of Nehemiah about Ezra and the other readers proclaiming and expounding to God's people the word of God, the laws they had there we might see that this whole passage taken together and the effect that it had on the people of Israel as they gathered back in the capital might be taken as being a sort of a living or illustrated example of the verse that Paul writes in Romans chapter 10 verse 17 that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God it is as the people were having the word expounded to them that they sort of grew in their hunger and their thirst and their interest in the knowledge of the Lord they wanted more and more of it let me just get the context of Paul's 17th verse in Romans 10 take back a few verses from there you see verse 13 it says whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher and how shall they preach except they be sent as it is written how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things but they have not all obeyed the gospel but Isaiah said

Lord who hath believed our report so then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God and it is the word of God that is being read and proclaimed to the people in the chapter we read in Nehemiah and most of us would recognize the necessity of faith yes it's not just mechanical sitting under the sound of God's word that has any effect on us we need faith for our salvation and the centrality of scripture to that faith yes we do need but it's not always grasped perhaps that our knowledge and understanding of God's word is something that must be worked at it's not just going to fall into our lap or just the sound going into our ears is going to have some magical effect on our brain we've got the raw material yes it's like the potter has the clay but he still has to fashion the vessel and we have the raw material as it were of God's word but we have to work at it as well it must be worked at it must be practiced repeatedly and yet it will never be perfected of course this side of eternity as Paul wrote to the Corinthians now I know in part but then shall I know in other words in eternity even as also

I am not and so we'll never have a full complete depth of knowledge of God's word we'll never plumb the whole depth of this side of eternity in the sense we will never have exhausted the wondrous depths of God's truth now I don't know if I've ever used this illustration before but when I was young a child I learned the violin but I hated having to practice you know every day when I came home I was meant to do a half an hour or an hour of practice or whatever scraping away and so on it wasn't a brilliant sound that came out but because it was learning you know you learned about other people who could play well and when I was young the world's best violinist or most famous violinist was somebody called Yehudi Menuhin I think he was Jewish actually an old gentleman there I can't remember what nationality he was but he was the world's most famous violinist at the time Yehudi Menuhin and he is reputed to have said if I stopped practicing for a day I would notice it I would feel it he would sense the difference in his ability if I stopped practicing for two days my wife would notice the difference she would hear the sounds coming through the eyes and it wasn't quite up to scratch or what it should be if I stopped practicing for a week he said the world would notice it in other words every performance he gave every interview every time every recording that he made it wouldn't be up to the standard that he knew was his best if he let it go even for a week if he stopped for a day he would feel it if he stopped for two days his wife the nearest person outside of himself would feel it if he stopped for a week the world would see it if we would take that attitude and apply it to our knowledge and our relationship to God's word then it would do us a lot of goods Yahudi Manuel was gifted yes he had that great talent that great ability his skill was a great gift from God but he was the world's top violinist in his day precisely because

he practiced his gift every day in life just like famous athletes or footballers or whatever you know they don't just say oh I played a great game there so I can relax for the next six months you see them out every day doing their keepy-uppy and doing their training and running the length of pitch and so on they would work at it the gift the talent they have they would work at it salvation is a great gift from God as is the faith through which that salvation is laid hold of remember Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8 for by grace

I say through faith not of yourselves it is the gift of God but that faith that gift must be practiced and worked at and nourished and fed and this cannot be done without turning day by day to the word of God and this was the case in the Old Testament times as well as under the Gospel from the passage with which we dealt this evening we see that as far as the reading and hearing of the word of God was concerned there was firstly a need secondly there was a supply of that need the need was supplied thirdly there was a response from the people fourthly we might say there was there was a permanent change there was a following following response there was a hungering and thirsting for more and finally as subsequent chapters would reveal it went on through Nehemiah it produced a permanent commitment by some to change the whole locus of their lives and to live forever as citizens of Jerusalem so firstly there was a need secondly there was a supply of the need thirdly there was a response to God's word from the people fourthly there was following response there was a hungering and thirsting for more and finally there was a permanent commitment by some to reorder the whole priority of their lives so we look at these briefly different sort of aspects of this firstly there was a need then as now a need for the word of

[7 : 22] God to be heard and we see in the context of this chapter that we read chapter 8 and on to the beginning of chapter 9 that if we look at what Nehemiah is about we remember that the city walls of Jerusalem were in a ruinous state and Nehemiah organised the rebuilding of them the city itself then was secure but apart from the walls there wasn't much else we were to turn back to chapter 7 we see at the beginning of chapter 7 came to pass when the wall was built and I had set up the doors and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the ruler of the palace charge over Jerusalem for he was a faithful man and feared God of all many and I said unto them let not the gates of Jerusalem be open until the sun be hot and while they stand by let them shut the doors and bar watches in other words during the night of the inhabitants of Jerusalem everyone in his watch and everyone to be open against his house now the city was large and great but the people were few therein and the houses were not built so in other words what Nehemiah had organized was the rebuilding of the boundary wall the wall round about where the city had stood the city had been completely destroyed by the

Babylonians so what you had was either ruinous heaps or empty spaces inside where most of the city had once been so there were very few people that actually rebuilt their houses there were some people in the city within its confines but basically what you had was a boundary wall a secure yes boundary wall but within its precincts you didn't have that many people to populate the city and to make it strong so there was the city walls but there wasn't much else there was a multitude of people from all the different tribes and locations in the land yes who had gathered and helped with the necessary work of building the wall and if you want to look through chapter 7 it's a huge chapter and it's mostly lists of names and the lists of names are of all these different groups of people who came to do their bit with building the wall and to help they had gathered and helped with the work of building the wall and they were happy to help and all as

Israelites they were all quite keen that there should be a Jerusalem and it should be their capital and that it should be built and indwelt and nor should it be a mere empty shell but it should be a vibrant living community a witness and a testimony to the fact that this was the city of God this was his people and God was in the midst of us you know what Psalm 46 tells us God in the midst of our world nothing shall her remove the Lord to her and help her will and that life only proved just two things are missing one is that of all this multitude there are precious few who have made the commitment yet to actually dwell in Jerusalem itself chapter 7 verse 4 the city was large and great but the people were few therein and the houses were not building everybody else there is happy to have done their bit but they want to get back on with their own homes and their own life and their own crops and business and so on and you know all of us we all want

Jerusalem to be there we want to know it's there and we lend a hand from time to time you know to keep it going but a permanent commitment well that's a bit different that would mean we walk talk live breathe eat slept Jerusalem day by day night by night it would be our whole life it would have to

become our whole you Thank you.

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