

**Hearing and Believing (John 5:23b–26)**  
**By Pastor Jeff Alexander (8/15/2021)**

**Introduction**

The Father sent the Son into the world to accomplish His will and purpose. The Son's obedience, as evidenced in the healing on the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath, demonstrated the fact that the Father gave "*all judgment* [the right to decide what to do] *to the Son that* [*hina*, purpose clause] *all may honor the Son*" (v. 23a).

1. Instead of honoring the Son by seeing and believing that the Father sent His Son to honor the Father by doing the will of God, the Jewish leaders accused Him of sin in violating their Sabbath rules.
2. The Lord responded to the charge by stating that He was merely working the work His Father was working—executing His plan to redeem and restore a people to establish His eternal kingdom.
3. This response provoked a second accusation, charging Jesus with *blasphemy* because He made Himself *equal* with God. In the Jews' view, there was only *one* God. Jesus, a mere man, asserting that status would be blasphemy (John 10:33).
4. Jesus countered by showing that He was not usurping the role of God as a *rival* (the sin of Adam) but sharing coequality as the second Person of the Godhead as revealed in Psalm 2:7. This *begetting* was a loving act of declaring eternal Sonship ("*I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son ...'*"), *not* begetting another into existence. There was never a time when the Son did not exist.

**I. The Divine Response**

1. Verses 19–23 record the Lord's response to this charge of blasphemy, stating three reasons:
  - a. Jesus argued that He was not *competing* but cooperating with the Father (v. 19).
  - b. Jesus argued that He was not being *independent* of but submitting to the Father's will (v. 20). The Father said, "*Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage*" (Psalm 2:8).
  - c. Jesus argued that only God has life in Himself; yet He and the Father *both* give life (v. 21). This is a clear and powerful evidence that Jesus is God come in the flesh.
2. Thus, Jesus concludes, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears **my** word and believes him [the Father] who sent me has [not gets, but already has] eternal life. He ... has passed from death to life*" (v. 24). It was the Father's work to give *life* to the dead; it was also the work of the Son to give *life* to the dead. (Please note that Christ gives life to whom *He* wills.)

**II. Hearing His Word**

1. Jesus sums up His authority as it pertains to the Jews (v. 24). It answers the question *why* they could not properly perceive Jesus as the Son of God equal with the Father. They were spiritually dead and unable to hear Him; thus, they could not believe Him.
  - a. Neither were these Jewish rulers able to remove themselves from this predicament (Matthew 11:27. Note also verses 25 and 26).

- b. Jesus informed the Jews that the reason they did not hear His words was because they were not of God (John 8:43, 45–47).
2. Opening spiritual perception (hearing) requires new life because everyone is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1, 2). Thus, “*The Son gives life to whom He will*” (John 5:21). He did not chose to give life to these Jews because the purpose of the Father would be fulfilled in their crucifying the Son on the cross. The Jews were His agents to accomplish this purpose (1 Corinthians 2:8).
  3. God makes the promise to save all who call upon Him (Romans 10:12, 13). In making this promise, four rhetorical questions are posed outlining the conditions for one to call on His name (vv. 14, 15).
    - a. “*How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?*” One cannot call on someone in whom they have no confidence (“believed”). Believing is possible only for those who have been granted life by God through the new birth. Those who hear the Son’s word and believe on the Father do so because they already have eternal *life* (John 5:24).
    - b. One can have no confidence unless there is a *reason* for that confidence (v. 14b). Simply hearing *about* Christ does not give one faith to trust Him; one must actually hear Christ Himself, supernatural communication through the Word of God, not an audible voice. John 5:25 explains this truth.
    - c. The third and fourth questions concern *how* sinners hear Christ in order to believe in Him—through hearing *gospel preaching* through a duly called and commissioned by God.
  2. Paul’s main point is that calling on the name of the Lord requires one’s *believing* in Christ. To believe in Christ, one must hear His voice through the gospel proclaimed by a divinely commissioned messenger. The Bible asserts that Christ Himself calls His own to salvation through the proclamation of His Word as confirmed in Ephesians 2:17: “*And he [Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were far off [Gentiles] and peace to those who were near [Jews].*” Paul summarizes this evangelical truth: “*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*” (Romans 10:17). The term “*word*” in this verse is the Greek word *rhema*, not *logos*. *Rhema* emphasizes *what* is spoken.

## Conclusion

1. Hearing and believing characterize those who possess the life of God given to them by Jesus Christ. In other words, hearing and believing are not the means of getting life but the consequence of having it.
2. Jesus informed His critics that their judgment of Him indicated they did not possess eternal life; therefore, they do not trust Him because they cannot hear His words. The granting of life is the sovereign work of the Son.
3. Have you heard the Son (John 10:27, 28) ? Faith comes when Christ speaks and is heard. Have you heard His voice? Has He called you out as one of His sheep? Are you following Him?
4. Many claim to *know* Christ, but they do not follow Him. They want to be their own shepherd. They graze in the pastures of sin and worldly pleasure. They respond to the voice of strangers (John 10:5) and follow them. However, the Lord’s sheep do not do these things, nor will they ever hear Him say to them, “*I never knew you: depart from me, you who work iniquity*” (Matthew 7:23).