
Article XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8, 16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

(Sermon Title)

Romans 10:6-15

I often say that one of the things I miss most about serving as a missionary in Brazil is the dress-code. Since comfort was the main focus in that tropical climate, shorts and a tee-shirt were often our work clothes. And of course, we normally wore those wonderfully comfortable sandals called flip-flops. They may not have been the most attractive things to wear, but they sure were comfortable on your feet.

The Bible doesn't talk much about "comfortable" feet. But the concept of *beautiful* feet does occur in Scripture. And it has nothing to do with appearance. I know that some of you ladies like to have lovely feet, so you go to the salon and get one of those pedicures. Admittedly, some feet look even better covered up! As a matter of fact, in Song of Solomon, Solomon tells his lovely bride how beautiful she is, describing

her various body parts with all kinds of flattering terms until he gets to her feet. Then he says in chapter 7 verse 1, “How beautiful are your feet when you have shoes on!” No, when the Bible does speak of beautiful feet, it refers not to their *appearance*, but to their *function*.

In Romans chapter 10, the Apostle Paul quotes Isaiah the prophet:

“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

Beautiful feet—from the Bible’s perspective—are those involved in the proclamation of the gospel. And we call that proclamation missions and evangelism.

There are, of course, a multitude of texts that support these assertions. In fact, a strong case could be made that the entire Bible is a missions text, tracing and explaining God’s redemptive plan—what it is, where it started, where it’s been, and where it needs to go. But we can see many of these ideas neatly summarized here in Romans 10. As we examine these verses, I’d like us to see three characteristics of “beautiful feet.”

I. First, beautiful feet carry the right message

The context of Romans 10 is Paul’s lamenting of the spiritual condition of his people, Israel (vs. 1). He then goes on to explain that the Jews had a misguided zeal for God, and a misunderstanding of the righteousness of God. The right message for evangelism and missions then is found in verse 6: “But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise...”

There is a righteousness to be had. It is not a righteousness of our own making, nor is it a righteousness of laws and works. It is the righteousness that comes by faith. That is the right message.

A. Now let's look at the proximity of the message (vs. 6)

Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) 7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

Here, Paul borrows some imagery from Deuteronomy 30 and Leviticus 18 where these words referred to the commandments of God being simple to understand and simple to obey. He then applies that imagery in relation to the righteousness of faith that is in Christ. Remember: the Jews had always been on a religious quest. They were forever reaching up to God. So worship consisted of going “up” to Jerusalem; then going “up” to the temple; then offering “up” their sacrifices to the priests, who placed them “up” on the alter, where they were burned and their smoke was carried “up” into Heaven, the dwelling place of God. But not so now. The righteousness that is of faith is much closer now. Where men could not reach the divine, the divine came down to men. We don't have to bring Christ down; for:

He, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2: 6-8)

No, we need not reach up to Him. He already reached down to us.

Nor do we need to reach down below us somewhere and extract Him from beneath. Jesus was indeed placed in the earth. He was buried. But He was “raised again for our justification” (Rom 4:25). No, we need not reach down to Christ. He has been there and done that. We can not raise Him again from the dead. He rose once to live and reign for all eternity.

No dear friends, the good news of the righteousness of faith found in Christ is not far away in the clouds, nor is it buried beneath our feet. It is much closer than that.

How close? Look again in verse 8:

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

Righteousness that comes from Christ is right here; in your heart and on your lips. It is as close as your profession of faith. The Bible says:

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus paid the penalty for our sin so that we might be saved. That's the gospel message. Now how is that appropriated? Through our profession of faith in Him. It's not up there in the clouds somewhere; nor is it down beneath our feet. It is in your heart, and on your lips. So we see the proximity of the message.

B. But we also see the simplicity of message (vs. 9)

So what is this profession of faith? It's the word of faith, according to verse 8, which we preach. Paul then goes on to define what exactly this profession consists of. Look with me in verse 9.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Notice first of all what this verse does *not* say:

It does not say "if you can name all 66 books of the Bible, you will be saved." Nor is there any mention of being able to explain seven views of the atonement in order to be saved. Surprisingly enough, even a basic knowledge of the lapsarian arguments,

doesn't enter the picture. It's just not that complicated! God's requirement in regard to our salvation was monumental; it required the sacrificial death of His only begotten Son. But *our* requirement is quite simple. It consists of belief and confession. And we must be very sure that we don't add requirements that complicate this simple expression of faith.

I remember working with volunteers in Brazil. It was not unusual to enter a home and begin sharing the gospel, and to be interrupted. The lady of the house would say, "Wait just a minute. There goes my neighbor; she needs to hear this." A little while later someone else would show up at the door and you'd start over with the gospel. An hour later, there might be 12 people crammed into that little living room. And you'd get down to the end and the American volunteer would say, "Well now that you have heard the good news of Jesus, would anyone here like to accept Him as your Lord and Savior?" And every hand would go up. The volunteer would be astounded. "You must not understand," he'd say, and go through the gospel again. "Do you understand now? Are there any questions?" he'd ask. Once again, he'd ask if anyone there would be willing to trust Christ, and again, every hand would go up. The volunteer would get all frustrated about it. Sometimes I'd have to quietly say, "Um...that's why we're here, isn't it? I thought we *wanted* them to accept Christ! Why are you trying to talk them *out* of it?!"

Now don't get me wrong: we need to share the whole gospel, and make sure people understand it. But we do a great injustice to them and to our Lord if we add requirements to accepting Christ that complicate the beautiful simplicity of faith.

Again, we are not talking about an “easy believism.” Paul does no such thing. He quickly points out the object of that confession: “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth *the Lord Jesus.*”

Confessing that Jesus is Lord is more than acknowledging that He is the Son of God, or even the Lord of the universe. The context of this verse has grown quite personal. There is an acknowledgement of personal responsibility here. Jesus is Lord! Not only over the universe, but He is Lord of my life. I can’t confess that without submitting myself to Him. Paul continues:

and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

“Believe in thine heart.” That’s the simplest expression of faith that exists. But there is an object of that faith as well: “that God has raised Him from the dead.” There are obviously other important doctrines in the Christian faith—the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the truth of the incarnation, the substitutionary aspect of His atonement. So why would the Apostle set the resurrection as the object of our belief? No doubt, because the bodily resurrection of Christ represents the crowning achievement of His redemption. John MacArthur calls it the “supreme validation” of Christ’s ministry. Simply put, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus proves that He is who He says He is, did what He said He would do, and accomplished what He said He would accomplish. Paul stated this forcefully when he said, “if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain...and ye are yet in your sins” (1 Cor.15ff.).

There is the proximity of the message—it’s nigh unto you; in your heart and on your lips

There is the simplicity of the message—“if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

C. In verse 10 we see the sufficiency of the message.

Here, Paul puts the believer’s response in proper order: inward belief, that is followed by outward confession. Now notice with me these two important aspects of conversion.

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” The product of this personal belief is righteousness. This is not righteousness that comes by works, but the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to us. That’s one side of our redemption; we receive the imputed righteousness of Christ which we *don’t* deserve. “And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Salvation is the other side of our redemption; the removal of the judgment that we *do* deserve. The gospel message shows God’s overwhelming sufficiency: He gives us the righteousness we don’t deserve, while taking away the judgment that we *do* deserve.

Beautiful feet carry the right message.

II. The second characteristic of beautiful feet is this: beautiful feet not only carry the right message, but they encounter the right people.

Look in verses 11-13.

11For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

A. The right people for the gospel is all people. Everyone is included!

I interviewed a religious pluralist one time and he said, "The problem with your fundamental brand of religion is that it's too restrictive; it excludes people." I responded, "On the contrary, Christianity is the most inclusive religion there is. The Lord Jesus opens His arms wide and invites everyone to come to Him and be saved." Over and over the Bible call of Christianity is "whosoever will may come!" The final invitation in the Bible comes from Christ Himself:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

B. Paul makes it as clear as he possibly can: Contrary to the opinion of that religious pluralist, the gospel message not only applies to everyone, but excludes no one!

Hence, there is no difference between Jew and Greek; all of them need Christ. Elsewhere, he says male or female, Barbarian or Scythian, bond or free; they all need Christ.

Why is the message of salvation for everyone? Because according to verse 12, "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." Another translation puts it this way: "for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him."

No doubt the Jews in Paul's audience would have been a bit startled by the bluntness of Paul's claim. They always saw themselves as somehow "special" in God's great redemptive plan. Now here the Apostle was giving them equal status in both the means of salvation and its resultant blessings!

I wonder sometimes if we are not guilty of the same prejudice. We really do believe that Christ died for the whole world, and that the gospel needs to be shared with everyone, but do we not sometimes pick and choose the "whosoever wills?"

I have a picture in my Bible that I have been carrying around for a while now. It's a picture of a Brazilian lady on the main street of a dusty little town call São Vicente. We were planting a church in that little town, so we brought in a group of volunteers, and we did a medical clinic and children's activities, and held open-air meetings at night. And every day we sent out groups doing door-to-door evangelism. The people were very receptive to us. It was a festive atmosphere. For four days I led small groups out through the neighborhoods, going into homes and sharing Christ. For four days I left the public school building where we were housed and walked down the main street, past this lady's house; and for four days she stood on her porch and watched us walk by. On the fifth day, as I led a team down the street and past her house, she called out to me, "Pastor—O senhor vem pra cá e falar comigo, ou vai passar de novo?" (Pastor—are you going to stop by here and talk with me today? Or will you pass right by me once again...). Of course we stopped right then and crowded into her little house, where statues of Mary and the saints lined the walls. I think her name was Aparecida. She was sixty-some years old. She served us fruit juice and listened to us politely as we shared the gospel. I wish I could say that she was saved that day, but she wasn't. But her picture serves as a reminder to me—"whosoever" means everybody.

I wonder how many people today we have passed by, sitting unnoticed right in front of our eyes. Folks who aren't clean enough, smart enough, rich enough, white enough, American enough, or like us enough to warrant our attention, much less our message of salvation and the blessings it brings. Perhaps if we listened a little more intently, we would hear their hearts cry out, "Are you going to stop by here and talk with me today? Or will you pass right by me once again..."

Beautiful feet carry the right message.

Beautiful feet encounter the right people.

II. Finally, beautiful feet employ the right method.

Look with me in verses 14-15:

14How 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? 15And 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!

It seems to me that there are four main emphases in these verses.

A. First, there is progression

See how one thing depends upon the other? There's a domino effect in place. Look how the process works. Who will be saved? Only those who call upon the name of the Lord. And who will call upon the name of the Lord? Only those who believe. And who will believe? Only those who have heard the gospel. And who will hear the gospel? Only those who have a preacher. And who will go as preachers? Only those who are sent.

Now let's turn that logic around the other way: if God did not send out preachers to proclaim His gospel, then no one would hear, no one would believe, no one would call upon His name and no one would be saved! You say, "Wait a minute. Are you saying that God depends upon us?" Absolutely not! God doesn't depend on anybody or anything. But the inescapable truth of Scripture is that while God is not dependant upon us for His existence, He has committed the role of evangelism to His people. God is the author of salvation, but we are His messengers.

B. That brings us to emphasis# 2: There is in these verses an emphasis on proclamation.

The gospel is something that must be proclaimed. Verse 17 says it clearly: “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, it is because someone shared the gospel with you. You weren’t saved by watching interpretive dance, or interpreting a mime. You weren’t even saved by watching some other believer’s lifestyle. The fact of the matter is no one has ever been saved by watching someone else’s Christian lifestyle. Those things may have played a part in preparing you, but if you are saved, it’s because you participated in this process. You called upon Him because you believed, and you believed because you heard, and you heard because someone cared enough to share God’s Word with you.

Years ago, I was taught that evangelism is a three-phase process. Phase one is *presence*. That’s living a Christian lifestyle for all to see. Phase two is *proclamation*. That’s where you take the Bible and actually share the gospel. Phase three is *persuasion*. That’s not saying we try to coerce or force anyone to accept Christ. All it means is that we make an earnest plea for that person to accept the Lord.

C. In verses 14 and 15, there is an emphasis on progression, and an emphasis on proclamation. Third, there is an emphasis on commission.

Look again in verse 15: “unless they be sent”

I remember that November day like it was yesterday. Cheryl and I were on the stage in Columbia, SC, where we were appointed as foreign missionaries by our convention’s International Mission Board. It was our commissioning service; our official

“sending off.” But if the truth be known, God did the commissioning. The IMB just facilitated the process!

How many times in Scripture are God’s people sent? Abraham was sent to sojourn in the land of promise; Moses was sent to confront pharaoh and lead his people from their bondage; all of the prophets were sent as messengers, proclaiming God’s blessings and His judgments; Isaiah was sent to preach to a desolate land until no one would listen; John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for our Lord; The Lord Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, was sent to the world to bring the message of redemption; Jesus told His disciples, “As the father has sent Me, so send I you;” Paul was sent as a missionary to the gentiles. And the list goes on. Need I say more? Our God is a saving God, and our God is a sending God. Here in Romans 10 there is a clear emphasis on His sending.

D. Finally, there is an emphasis on obligation.

Read in its entirety, these verses are making a plea. Paul spends the rest of chapter 10 lamenting the fact that Israel continually heard the gospel, and continually rejected it. But did Paul give up on his countrymen? No. Remember how this chapter began? “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” Those of us who have the truth are obligated to share that truth. It should be our heart’s desire and continual prayer to God to see folks saved.

Sometimes when I see our college students walking across our campus wearing flip-flops, I am a bit envious. I like having comfortable feet. But when I read Romans

10, I am reminded that God's desire for us is not necessarily comfortable feet, but rather beautiful feet.

Beautiful feet carry the right message—the simple gospel.

Beautiful feet encounter the right people—the gospel message is for everybody; all are included, none is excluded.

Beautiful feet employ the right method—going and proclaiming the truth to a world that so desperately needs it.

May God grant to us beautiful feet.

Dr. Rich Elligson