
“Beautiful Feet”

ROMANS 10:14-15

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AT A GLANCE

There are so many people spiritually stranded, helpless, and alone, in need of spiritual rescue. Who will they call to rescue them? How will they call upon the name of Jesus for salvation if they've never heard the name of Jesus and what He did for them? Who will tell them?

INTRODUCTION

A few weeks ago my wife, Kellye, was driving home from a funeral. Driving along the backroads, she got a flat tire and pulled over to the side of the road. Stranded by herself in a remote part of Illinois, and with no cell signal in that spot, she climbed a hill and made one phone call. In that moment she wasn't interested in chatting with a friend. She was calling for rescue. She was calling for someone to do something about the situation. She called me, her knight in shining armor.

Of course I sprang into action, got her located on my iPhone, assured her I'd be there in 54 minutes and would get her back on the road home. In the meantime, I had her move to a safer location, which also improved her cell signal. Before I could even leave the house, a good Samaritan drove by and offered his assistance. Of course, you can never be too safe, so she gave me a good description of the man and his vehicle license plate just in case. Thankfully, the man was in fact a good Samaritan and got her fixed up while I stayed on the phone with her.

As we reflected on the situation and praised the Lord for protecting her in a really vulnerable situation, we made a couple observations. First, that she could have called 911 and informed the local law enforcement that she was a stranded and alone, and perhaps they would have sent a unit to at least ensure her safety. Second, that our insurance offers roadside assistance. I probably would have made it to Kellye before they did, so it never crossed my mind to call them. But it was a good reminder of what she could have done if necessary.

Reflecting on this experience reminds me of the plight of humanity. There are so many people spiritually stranded, helpless, and alone, in need of spiritual rescue. Who will they call to rescue them? How will they call upon the name of Jesus for salvation if they've never heard the name of Jesus and what He did for them? Who will tell them? These are the questions Paul presents us with in today's passage.

ROMANS 10:14-15

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

HOW WILL THEY CALL?

Last week we concluded with this incredible truth, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:13) But it begs the question in **verse 14, How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?** How will people know to ask Jesus for forgiveness of sin and throw themselves upon the rock of salvation if they do believe he can save them? If they do not believe God raised Him from the dead? Believe He died to atone for their sin? Believe that their sin separates them from God? Believe that God loves them enough to do something about that? Who will call upon a savior they do not believe has what they need for salvation?

HOW WILL THEY BELIEVE?

Which leads to Paul’s next question, **And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?** To believe on Jesus, one must hear about Jesus. When I switched auto insurance carriers a few years ago, my agent made sure to point out that our policy includes roadside assistance. Positioned at the top of the main screen on my insurance app is a button titled “roadside.” They want their clients to know that this service is included. It’s not a secret. No one will ever call for roadside assistance if they don’t know it’s available. Our insurance company wants us to know it is! Likewise, the Lord wants people to know He sent a rescuer, a Savior, upon whom anyone can call for salvation.

HOW WILL THEY HEAR?

This begs the third question, **And how are they to hear without someone preaching?** The Gospel is a message that must be spoken. I think of the saying, “Preach the gospel always. When necessary, use words.” I get the sentiment. Let your work ethic, your integrity and compassion, the way you treat your parents, your wife, your kids, all these, let them demonstrate the gospel. Let your way of life be an illustration of the sacrificial love of Christ. But it would be an error to use this as an excuse to not use words.

While it may be difficult to truly know what Francis of Assisi meant when he said, “Preach the Gospel always. When necessary, use words,” we do know how modern Christians interpret it. It’s almost as if some Christians think it’s never necessary to use words; and even more virtuous to “practice” your faith than to “preach” it. While we absolutely do not want to be found guilty of not practicing what we preach, the fact is the gospel is not a work ethic. It’s not a marriage relationship. It’s not volunteering. All of those help us preach the gospel, but none of them is an adequate substitute for it. Let your “practice” open the doors, but don’t stop there. **Preach** the gospel with words.

Jesus commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Witnesses witness. They testify; they speak; they preach the gospel.

That word **preach** is the Greek word *kerusso*. It means to proclaim or to herald. Preaching solicits a response. Preaching carries with it a sense of urgency because the gospel is a message of hope and deliverance! Preaching comes with the transformational power of the gospel, the power of God for salvation to all who believe. Which brings us to our fourth and final question.

HOW WILL THEY PREACH?

Verse 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” Paul quoted Isaiah 52:7, in which the prophet Isaiah was speaking in the immediate sense of Judah’s return from Babylonian captivity. The preaching of the good news was the heralding of the coming salvation of the people in exile. They would be powerfully restored to the promised land by the Lord.

Yet later in the text, in verse 10, we see a future salvation; a salvation that would be “before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth.” *Isaiah 52:10* Paul rightly interpreted this to point to the salvation offered to the entire world; salvation in Christ alone. Paul’s point is that the salvation of all salvations has come. Whoever calls upon the name of Jesus will be saved!

Now Paul asks an interesting question, **how are they to preach unless they are sent?** To be sent implies a commission. It implies authority. It implies a sender. And I wonder in Paul’s mind who is the commissioner? Who is the authority? Who is the sender? If we can determine this, perhaps we can determine who is to be sent.

Two scripture passages seem pertinent. *Acts 13:1-3* “Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.”

What do you observe? First, the Holy Spirit said to the gathered church while they were worshipping and fasting that Barnabas and Saul should be commissioned to a special work. Second, it was the church that sent them. That was Paul’s experience of his commission. Now let’s look at how he expressed his commission. *Romans 1:4-5*, “...declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations...”

Introducing himself to the Roman church, Paul says that he received grace and apostleship from Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul was sent by the church at Antioch in obedience to the commission of Christ. Paul was a specially sent missionary; set apart from the other men in the church in Antioch and commissioned specifically “for the sake of his name among all the nations.”

EVERY MEMBER A MISSIONARY?

This might raise the question in your mind, why then do we have a huge sign in our Fireside Room that says, “Every member a missionary?” By this, we do not believe that every member of the church is commissioned to go the way Paul was. We don’t believe that everyone is called to live like our missionary’s, the Logan’s, in Japan. However, while some are to be set apart by the church and sent for specific work among all the nations, we believe that every believer has been given the authoritative commission of Jesus to make disciples wherever they are.

If we return to the question of who is the authority, and who is the sender, we arrive at Jesus. Jesus was the authority and the sender for Saul (Paul) and Barnabas. It was Christ, through His Holy Spirit, in the context of His church, who set them apart for that special work.

And it was Christ who said to His disciples, “...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” *Matthew 28:18-20*

He also said to His disciples in *Acts 1:8*, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” John and Peter were the main witnesses for Christ in the first few chapters of Acts, but by chapter 4 we read that the whole church was “filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” *Acts 4:31*

That they continued to speak means they had already been speaking the word of God. Stephen, a man set apart to help ensure widows got adequate food in Acts 6, perhaps one of the first deacons,

was the first martyr of the church by Acts 7. And Stephen preached a longer sermon than the Apostle Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2!

THE GREAT COMMISSION IS FOR ALL BELIEVERS

As the gospel made its way out of Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, we see several things that suggest the Great Commission is for the whole church. The Apostle Paul told Timothy to teach what he had been taught to men who could teach others and he told older women to disciple younger women.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul told them to imitate him and others who lived according to his example. According to the New Testament, every church is to be led by a plurality of elders who teach and preach the word of God. Those elders are to set an example in speech and in conduct for others to follow, including following into the work of preaching.

So, as I see it, it was not only the original disciples who are commissioned by Jesus in the Great Commission, but believers everywhere! And if the commissioner who has all authority in heaven and on earth has commissioned His disciples to make more disciples, teaching them to obey everything He taught them, that tells me in no uncertain terms that Jesus doesn't exempt you from this sacred and beautiful commission. And if you've been commissioned, you've been sent. Perhaps not like the Apostle Paul, perhaps not like the Logans, perhaps not to preach from the pulpit. But if you've believed the gospel, you've been entrusted with the gospel. You've been commissioned to take that gospel across the street and around the world.

After all, how are they to hear without someone preaching? There are certain limitations that the Lord has put in place that we must operate within. If we reverse the order of these verses, we get the concept of God's plan for salvation: the church sends our people out into the world with the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. These people proclaim the gospel wherever they go, inviting a response as the Lord creates opportunity. The people hear the gospel, and they believe it. Because they believe the gospel, they call out to Jesus for salvation.

Could God make it work some other way? Of course, but He didn't. This is how salvation works. At least as it relates to man's responsibility. As far as you're concerned, what you need to know is no one is going to call upon the name of the Lord unless someone preaches the gospel to them. Or think of it in the positive, every person who is going to be saved is going to have someone deliver the gospel to them. Why not you?

POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS

You might respond, "I cannot go." Why not? What is keeping you from going to them? You think any missionary in the history of gospel mission has found it convenient to go to the nations? Do you think anyone has ever not had to count the cost of giving their whole life to this mission? What makes you different?

"I'm comfortable here." Perhaps He will have you uproot your life and move. You will not be the first, nor will you be the last to make such a profound sacrifice. Or perhaps He will allow you to sleep in a comfortable bed every night in a community you call home, in a culture you are familiar with, and He will use you right here through technology that allows you to get into the homes of unreached people in closed countries. Or perhaps He wants to use you to reach the lost in your own neighborhood.

"Ah, Pastor Brian, but I'm too old!" Abraham was 75 years old when God told him to get up and go to an unknown land. This year both likely presidential candidates, vying for the most powerful and stressful job on the planet, are older than that. Many people's most significant years were their

golden years. I fully expect my 60's and 70's to be the most impactful years of my life. By God's grace they will be.

"Yes, but I'm too young." Fine, start preparing your heart and your mind now. Learn the Word of God. Memorize it. Be disciplined. Be a good church member. Love Christ's church. Don't just show up here treading water for the next several years. This is your preparation for the nations. Ask the Lord to give you a glorious vision of a local church someplace where no local church exists today. Ask Him to show you where He would have you go. Ask Him to use this church to make you ready and send you out!

"What about my health?" The Great Commission ought to be reason enough to steward your health. I wonder how many people are unable to respond to God's call because they have neglected their health. Jesus told us the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, *and* strength. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, it belongs to Him.

For some, that ship has sailed. There may not be anything you can do about it now. But for those who can, we need to come to grips with the fact that our bodies are vessels of clay carrying the precious message of the Gospel. Steward your body in such a way that so long as it depends on you, meaning absent any providential disabling event, you and your beautiful feet are capable of responding to the call of God on your life to "Go!"

But for everyone, including those who truly cannot go, we can all do the work of prayer. In the 40-day devotional book called *Why Pray*, author John DeVries refers to prayer as "work." He told the story of a missionary named Wesley Duewel. Duewel described the first 25 years of his mission in India as a struggle to plant one church per year. They decided that something was wrong, so they enlisted 1000 prayer partners. Over the next few years their mission exploded from 25 churches to 550! From 2,000 believers to 75,000! You may not be able to be the feet of those bringing good news, but you can sure be on your knees beating on the gates of Heaven to supply every need of those who are. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers!

There is a saying, "You can be a faithful goer, a faithful sender, or unfaithful." If you cannot go, send – give, pray, partner. Because God has so ordained that no one will come to faith in Christ unless people are sent to preach the Gospel. **How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!**

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