

# Beautiful Feet: Proclaiming the Glories of the Gospel

Eric C. Coher

Romans 10:14-21

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Romans 10:14-15 is the theology behind the Great Commission. In verses 14 and 15 we will see the process that is involved in a person calling on the name of the lord. In verses 16-21 Paul will deal with the question that I am sure has been asked to you a time or two in your Christian life. That question is: if Jesus is the only way to a right relationship with God, then what is to come of the multitude of those who have never heard the gospel?

“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? 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!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.” Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.” But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”” Romans 10:14–21

## **1. THE HOPE OF EVERY EVANGELISTIC EFFORT IS THAT THE LOST WOULD CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD. (v. 13-14)**

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” 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? Romans 10:13-14

Last week we ended our study of Romans with verse 13 which is a beautiful promise given to all men everywhere. The word *everyone* is glorious. It means everyone apart from any social distinction, everyone apart from any economical distinction, everyone apart from any ethnic distinction, and everyone apart from any geographic distinction. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. If we turned this around and stated it as an imperative it would read - You must call on the name of the Lord to be saved. The hope and prayer of all our evangelism is that the lost would see their desperate need for Christ and that they would in turn cry out to Him

asking for His mercy and grace. But what exactly does it mean to call on the name of the Lord? If calling on the name of the Lord is the imperative or the requirement for being saved, then we must be very clear as to what calling on the name of the Lord means.

In an effort to not overcomplicate the simplicity of the gospel I think we can say that calling on the name of the Lord must mean no less than (1) Understanding your sin and broken fellowship with God (heart conviction). Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 was that the gospel would come to them not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. (2) Belief that Jesus is your only hope (John 14:6). (3) Calling out to Christ in faith and repentance to save you from your sin. Just a few verses back in Romans 10:9 Paul said, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. You must call on the name of the Lord to be saved. What Paul does in verses 14-15 is trace back the process that must take place in order for a person to call on Christ for forgiveness of sin. Paul does this by asking four rhetorical questions.

1. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?

Before a person can call on the name of the Lord they must believe. A person must understand with their mind what God has revealed about himself and what he has called them to do. All too often we see churches, pastors, and ministries that get people emotionally stirred up about this or that without ever giving them something objective to believe in and anchor their hope in. One pastor said, "You have never preached the gospel until you have given people something to believe in."

2. How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?

Before a person can believe they must hear the gospel message. Paul is going to tell us in verse 17 that faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. God has designed it such that saving faith is the result of a person hearing the truth of the gospel message. This is why we are gospel-focused as a church. This is why we guard the truth of the gospel message and are called to expose false gospels. This is why we don't get behind the pulpit and preach feelings and philosophies. People don't need to hear philosophies; they're a dime a dozen in this world. Paul said, "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ" Colossians 2:8. People need to hear the message of Christ's birth, sinless life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection.

3. How are they to hear without someone preaching?

Before a person can hear the gospel message there must be a messenger. A message, therefore, necessitates a messenger. God himself was the first messenger. He foretold of the coming Messiah in Genesis 3:15 who would crush the head of the serpent. All throughout redemptive history, God has graciously raised up men who have proclaimed the gospel. Many of you can

probably still remember the person who came to you with the gospel message. I can remember sitting at a lunch table in the Loft at USI when I first heard and understood the gospel message that led me to faith and repentance in Christ alone. A good friend of mine often uses the phrase, "There is little impact without contact." In order for hearers to receive the gospel there must be a messenger to bring the message to them.

4. How are they to preach unless they are sent? (v. 15)

## **2. GOD'S METHOD OF REACHING THE LOST WITH THE GOSPEL IS MEN. (v. 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!" Romans 10:15

God could have chosen any method for reaching the world with the gospel. He could have written it in the clouds. He could have tasked the angels with preaching the gospel. He could have called the rocks to cry out (Luke 19:40). But He chose to use men as his method of transmitting the truth of the gospel. Notice that these preachers are sent. Being sent assumes a sender. Who is the sender? Remember what Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 9:37-38. He said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Jesus is the Lord of the harvest and He sends preachers into the harvest field. Let me ask you this question: Are you praying for laborers? Are you asking God to raise up more men and more women who would take the gospel not only to our neighborhoods and community, but also to the ends of the earth.

We know that Jesus is the sender, but who are these preachers or messengers? I think it is clear from the text that God does specifically call and uniquely gift some men to be preachers, teachers, and evangelists, but I think the text also has a broader application. Every believer has been called to preach the gospel. The fact that some are uniquely gifted by God as preachers, teachers, and evangelists, doesn't negate the fact that every believer, without exception, has been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. Turn over to 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. Paul says, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Who are the messengers? You are!

Four biblical reasons why every believer should live as a missionary:

1. The command from above - Go into all the World and preach the gospel... Mark 16:15
2. The cry from beneath - I beg you [Abraham] send [Lazarus] to my father's house. Luke 16:27
3. The call from without - Come over to Macedonia and help us. Acts 16:9

#### 4. The constraint from within – The love of Christ compels us. 2 Cor. 5:14<sup>1</sup>

Notice what Paul says about messengers of the gospel. He quotes Isaiah 52:7 saying, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” Do you have beautiful feet? Not physically, but in the sense that you are sharing the message of reconciliation with the lost? The context of Isaiah 52 is that of a messenger bringing back the good news that Israel had been released from Babylonian captivity. How much better is the news and how much more beautiful are the feet of those who carry the message that God, through the death of His Son, frees men from the wreckage of their sin.

Years ago I was challenged by a message on the necessity of missions. While I can’t remember all of the content of that message, I do clearly remember one point. That point was, “Give God your yes and He will put it on the map.” In other words, commit to being a messenger and God will take care of the “where”. That may be to your next-door neighbor, it may be to your co-worker, it might be to the person that shares a locker next to you, it may be the person who helps take care of your lawn, it may be the single mom down the street, it might be to another state, and it could be to another country. Are you willing to give God your yes and let Him put it on the map? For many of us we are a little timid of that thought. We worry, “What if God calls me to go?” The reality is that God has already called you to go – the question is just where.

Let me say briefly something about cross-cultural missions. Many Christians never even consider going to the mission field. They are planning to stay and maybe willing to go if God “makes” them. I want to encourage you to some counter Christian-cultural thinking here. What if instead of planning to stay but willing to “maybe” go, you were planning to go but willing to stay. One of the questions that I ask myself from time to time is, “If not me, then who? If not now, then when?” Are we willing to give God our yes and let him put it on the map? God will give you all the grace you need to minister in whatever direction He points you! What a privilege it is to be called by God to be a messenger of the Good News.

The progression that we have seen so far in verses 14-15 is Christ sends messengers, messengers preach, people hear, hearers believe, believers call, and those who call on the name of the Lord are saved. The question that Paul raises beginning in verse 16 is what if Christ sends messengers, messengers preach, people hear, but people don’t believe?

### **3. SADLY, NOT EVERYONE WHO HEARS THE GOSPEL WILL BELIEVE. (v. 16-20)**

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. But I

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament Volume 1*. (Colorado Springs: David Cook, 1989), 548.

ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.” Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.” Romans 10:16-20

Paul changes gears here from the joyous truth that God sends out messengers to preach the gospel so that the lost might hear, believe, and call on His name to the sad reality that by in large, Israel has not believed the gospel and has rejected Christ as her only hope for salvation. The reality is that sometimes the gospel, as wonderful of a message as it is, falls on deaf ears. Here again we see the sovereignty of God in salvation. Paul says, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” Though Israel had the promises given to Abraham, though they had the law given to Moses, though they had the prophets who foretold of the coming Messiah, though Jesus Himself stepped out of glory and came to His own, His own people did not receive Him (John 1:11). It is interesting to note that the verse that Paul quotes here from Isaiah 52:7, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us,” comes right before Isaiah 53 which is probably the most clear prophecy concerning the coming Christ – but Israel still didn’t believe.

What do we learn from this? We learn that we are not in control of whether people believe the message that they hear. You are not responsible for the results, but you are responsible to be engaged in the process. To the degree that you think you are responsible for the results, you will find yourself discouraged and frustrated when people with whom you are sharing the gospel don’t respond in faith and repentance. Not only will you feel discouraged, but you might even become manipulative in your evangelistic approach. Saving faith in Christ is not a human act or accomplishment; it’s not something we can manipulate or manage; nor is it something we can control or coerce. Instead, saving faith in Christ is a gift from God. Are you praying for laborers?

Don’t forget that you are not the Holy Spirit. Remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:5? He asked, “What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe - as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” You are a planter and a waterer; God is responsible for bringing about new life. It’s important that we don’t forget that.

Notice also that trusting Christ is not only a matter of *believing*, but it is also a matter of *obeying*. Paul said, “But they have not all have obeyed the gospel.” In Romans 6:1 Paul said, “But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.” True saving faith always results in a changed life.

Look at verse 17. Paul says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." I think verse 17 is somewhat of a summary statement of what Paul has already said in verses 14 and 15, but Let me make a few brief observations before we move on.

1. When a person hears the gospel, who is it that they are actually hearing? Look at the text. Paul says that they, "Hear the word of Christ." When a person hears the gospel faithfully preached, it is as if they are hearing the very words of Christ Himself. Jesus speaks through His messengers, so that those who hear the messenger to the extent of believing in Christ and calling on [Him] for salvation have actually heard Jesus as He has spoken His truth to them and called them to faith.<sup>2</sup> This isn't mystical, rather the objective truth of God's Word. Jesus is the Word!
2. Faith is not the result of any mystical experience or subjective feelings. People are not converted by any other means than that they, in some way, hear the gospel faithfully preached and thus respond accordingly in faith and repentance. Faith doesn't come by any subjective means, but rather by hearing the objective truth of God's Word.
3. This is why we are not caught up in the social gospel... People MUST hear the gospel. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert have written a very balance book on this subject titled *What is the Mission of the Church*.

In verses 18 and 19 Paul answers two possible objections or defenses that could be made for Israel's unbelief. The first objection in verse 18 is, "What if they have never heard?" Many of you have probably heard this question raised by a non-Christian before. How can Israel, or anyone else for that matter, be held responsible for their unbelief if they have never heard the gospel? Paul answers that question for us when he says, "But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

It is interesting to note that Paul quotes David in Psalm 19:4 in this verse. If you remember, Psalm 19 is that great Psalm which deals with the revelation of God – verses 1-6 deal with God's general revelation in nature and verses 7-11 deal with the Word of God or special revelation. David in Psalm 19:1-4 writes, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." What about those who have never heard? In one sense there aren't any. Though it is not a lot of light, there has been a universal proclamation of the gospel in nature. Remember what Paul said in Romans 1:19-20? He said, "For what can be known about God is [has been made] plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been

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<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice, Romans: God and History Volume 3. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 1263.

clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." Not only has Israel heard the gospel through general revelation, but she has also heard the gospel proclaimed by the prophets and Paul himself. They have had a lot of light (and so have we), but more light doesn't necessarily mean more belief. Cf. John 3:19

The second objection that Paul anticipates is in verse 19. What if they don't understand? They do. Paul says, "But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." Moses warned Israel that just as she provoked God's jealousy by turning and following other gods, God Himself would provoke her to jealousy so she would turn back to Him. Instead of being awakened to their need for grace by seeing the Gentiles belief of the gospel as a fulfillment of their own Scripture, Israel refused to turn to God and heed His clear warning.

Think with me here for a second. If the Jews really didn't understand the gospel, more specifically the gospel of grace through faith in the risen Son of God, then why do you suppose they had such an emotionally charged reaction when it was proclaimed to and believed by the Gentiles? If the Jews really had no understanding of the gospel, then the Gentiles' belief of the gospel would have just been another example of their foolishness. Why should the Jews care what the Gentiles believe? But that's not the reaction that we see. Instead of indifference on the part of the Jews, we see a deep-rooted hostility and jealousy. Paul tells us that the Jews really did understand the gospel. They understood it enough to be provoked to jealousy that the Gentiles of all people, the people who were not even a nation, believed it by faith.

What is happening in verses 19-20 is really an incredible act of God's mercy to both the Jews and the Gentiles. God is intentionally using jealousy to try and awaken Israel to her need for grace. Jealousy is powerful. Think about two children desiring to play with the same toy. It is jealousy that causes one to want what the other has. The Jews thought of themselves as superior to the Gentiles in every way. But in God's wisdom He chose to take the gospel to those who were not a nation; to those who were less intelligent (foolish).

Paul goes on to quote Isaiah from Isaiah 65:1 when he says, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." Not only did God take the gospel to those who were foolish or less intelligent than the Jews, but he also took it to a people less motivated or zealous than they were. The Gentiles were not the original recipients of God's special favor, they didn't possess the promises, the law, and the prophets – but yet they believed! What a picture of mercy. And don't forget that such were we. We were born haters of God and enemies of the cross. Paul reminds us in Romans 3 that no one seeks after God. But God in His mercy stepped into our deadness and gave us new life!

Notice that Paul quotes Moses and Isaiah in verses 19 and 20. Moses represents the Law and Isaiah represents the Prophets. Paul is in effect saying that the Law and the Prophets bear witness that you have heard and indeed you do understand. They don't understand like a believer understands who has been given a new heart, but they understand enough to be held accountable for their unbelief. Everyone everywhere has enough light to be held accountable for his sin and rebellion and is held responsible to seek after God in faith and repentance.

#### **4. GOD IS GRACIOUS, MERCIFUL, AND PATIENT BUT DON'T PRESUME ON HIS KINDNESS. (v. 21)**

But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people." Romans 10:21

Despite Israel's obstinance and hard-hearted disobedience, God has been gracious, merciful, and patient. The picture that we see here in verse 21 is like that of a loving Father who desires to welcome home His erring child. God stands with His hands held out ready to welcome anyone in who would call on His name in faith and repentance. Remember what Jesus said to the Jews in Matthew 23:37? He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

This verse teaches us about the longsuffering character of God. Though He is perfectly just, in His grace He often delays justice. Peter reminds us, "[He] is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" 2 Peter 3:9. Paul warns us not to, "Presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, [because] God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance" Romans 2:4.

Let me close with a sobering story. In 1982, ABC Evening News reported on an unusual work of modern art - a chair affixed to a shotgun. It was to be viewed by sitting in the chair and looking directly into the gun barrel. The gun was loaded and set on a timer to fire at an undetermined moment within the next hundred years. The amazing thing was that people waited in lines to sit and stare into the shell's path! They all knew that the gun could go off at point-blank range at any moment, but they were gambling that the fatal blast wouldn't happen during their minute in the chair. Yes, it was foolhardy, yet many people who wouldn't dream of sitting in that chair live a lifetime gambling that they can get away with sin.

Is this you? Are you taking advantage of God's kindness. Today is the day of salvation. Humble your heart before God in the quietness of your own heart. Call on His name in faith and repentance. His promise is whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!