

Are Your Feet Beautiful?

Romans 10:11-15

August 22nd, 2010



Scripture

"For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 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? 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!"

Just a few months after we came to Hardin Baptist in 1983, we went on our first trip overseas with the official assignment of preaching the gospel. We were placed in a small village called New Village in Trinidad. The pastor was Alcid Cummins. Preachers who had been to Trinidad before had told me what it was like, but it was my first trip to preach the gospel and I was by myself; there wasn't another preacher for 50 or 60 miles. Service started that night and I arrived a little early with Pastor Cummins. There were around 10 adults and several children at the service. There were only

three men in the service, which included me and Pastor Cummins. I was expecting it to be somewhat like our services here because it was a Baptist Church, but I have to say that it was not like our services. When those people began to worship, they worshipped! They enjoyed worshipping the Lord. Now, being used to a 20 minute service of music and preaching, I was pumped when the 20 minutes was up and I was ready to preach to the 10 adults who were there. They sang for about 10 more minutes, and then the pastor called on Sister Fields to pray. You have to remember that I was raised in Western KY; I had never heard a pastor call on a woman to pray before in my life. I looked over into the amen corner and Sister Fields got up out of her pew, and then she did something I had never seen anyone do before. She reached under the pew and pulled out a prayer pillow. She put it in front of the pew, turned around backwards, and kneeled on that pillow. Fifteen minutes later she concluded her prayer with these words: "God, take a hot coal off of Your altar in Heaven and place on this young boy's lips. May it burn in his mouth so hot that he cannot hush talking about You until that coal burns out. Amen." Man, I was ready to preach! The problem was they weren't ready for me to preach; they sang 30 more minutes. An hour later another sister prayed, not quite as good as Sister Fields, but she got the job done. I was ready to preach again, but they still weren't ready. An hour and a half later, they were ready. The place was packed and people were even looking in through the windows. To be honest with you, I was already exhausted! By the time they introduced me to the congregation, I was not ready to preach at all! Before I got there I was told that in Trinidad they loved preaching, and if you didn't preach at least an hour they didn't really believe you were a man of God. Back in those days, I could only preach about 15 minutes. On that first night, I took four consecutive sermons and preached for an hour and a half! I turned the invitation over to Pastor Cummins, but I don't remember a thing that happened during it. I sat in my chair on the stage totally exhausted. As the invitation came to a conclusion, the people didn't leave. You see, while I was preaching, if they knew the Scripture, they would quote it with me. Now I am sitting at the pulpit and a young girl comes to

stand in front of me with a silver tray. A silver plate, a glass, a knife, a fork, a piece of cake, and a cold bottle of Coke are on the tray. The whole church is watching, and I realized this was for me. By now, there are about 30 children all around me. I start to share my cake with them, and the young girl spats their hands and tells them no, this is for Bro. Ricky. When I cut into that cake and put it into my mouth, I hear the church say in unison, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news." I don't remember how long it took me to drink my Coke and eat my cake, but the whole time, they repeated that in unison. I was thinking fleshly inside, *if you could just see my feet. They are ugly, they are smelly, and they have callouses on them.* Then I remembered that, truly, beauty must be in the eye of the beholder. I didn't view my feet the way they did. They viewed my feet as beautiful because I had traveled a great distance from America to bring them the good news of Jesus Christ.

The Human Side of Salvation

I really wish people wouldn't get so upset when they read the Bible and understand there is a divine side of salvation, because in all of the writings of the New Testament, the Bible always balances the divine side with the human side. Romans 10 is teaching the human side of salvation as Paul talked about the nation of Israel, for whom he is broken hearted and is willing to be accursed from Christ. His prayer was that they might be saved, but he tells us the reason they are not saved as a nation of people is not the fault of God, but the fault of Israel. If a sinner doesn't believe the gospel, it is not God's fault. The responsibility for believing the gospel lies with the sinner.

- **The Responsibility of the Church**

Now, I want to correct what I believe is an error in thinking. There are a lot of people who believe it is the Church's fault that people don't get saved. I don't believe that. It is not the fault of the Church that a sinner dies and splits hell wide open. It is the sinner's fault. According to the book

of Romans, he has been given a light from God and doesn't live up to the light that he has. Therefore, God is just to condemn that sinner into a place of eternal torment where he will be separated from God forever. I believe this passage teaches that from the human side of salvation, it is the sinner's fault that he is in a state of unbelief. But it also teaches that it is the Church's responsibility that some have still not heard.

There is an unbroken chain on the divine side of salvation, which was started before the foundation of the world. It cannot be broken and it ensures eternal security. But there is another chain on the human side of salvation and Paul teaches it in this chapter. This chain can be broken, and has been broken in many, many people's lives.

Verses 9 and 10 say that if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved. In verse 11, Paul teaches that the person who confesses and believes will never be put to shame, meaning the person who trusts in the finished work of Christ on the cross for his salvation will never be shamed before God. He will never be shamed before man; he will be with God forever, and ever.

Then Paul talks about the availability of salvation, and he has talked about it throughout the whole book of Romans. He says that with God there is no distinction between a Jew and a Gentile. It doesn't matter if you are a Jew in need of salvation, or if you are a Gentile in need of salvation, God, who is Lord, is Lord of all. God will bestow His riches on anyone who calls on Him. Did you hear that? You have to balance the divine and the human sides of salvation, and on the human side, we see that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will have God's riches bestowed upon them.

The word "*call*" literally means 'an appeal for help; to ask for help.' The person who appeals to God for salvation will be saved. Notice in verses 11-13 in the ESV, they all start with the English word "for." Those are connecting words, so Paul is connecting; he is stringing, his thoughts together here. Because God is Lord of all and will bestow His riches on

anyone who calls, Paul can say in verse 13, "*For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.*"

Then he asks four questions:

1. How can they call on Him in whom they have never believed?
2. How can they believe in Him in whom they have never heard?
3. How can they hear without someone preaching?
4. How can they preach unless they be sent?

When he talks about the person being sent to share the good news, he quotes the Old Testament passage from Isaiah 52:7, which speaks about Israel being delivered from Babylonian captivity. There will be runners who will announce the good news to the inhabitants that they are now free again! "*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!*"

- **The Chain of the Human Side of Salvation**

I want to go down to verse 15 and go backwards to verse 13. This gives us six activities in the chain of the human side of salvation:

1. Someone is **sent** with the good news.
2. The good news is **preached**.
3. Someone **hears**.
4. When someone hears, they **believe**.
5. When they hear and believe, they **call** upon the name of the Lord.
6. The one who calls will be **saved**.

Any person who appeals to God for salvation gets saved! But then Paul said that you won't call on the Lord unless you believe. It's like when my kids were little; there were things they wanted to do that they knew Daddy wouldn't let them do. So they would preface their request this way, "Daddy, I know you aren't going to let us, but..." Then they would ask for what they knew I wasn't going to let them do! I never answered that question; I just always said, "If you don't believe I am going to let

you do it, you shouldn't be asking." They were asking me, but in asking me, they were already telling me they didn't believe. So if they didn't believe in Dad, will Dad answer? Absolutely not!

Do you see Paul's logic? Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, but he said that you won't call on Him to save you if you don't believe He will save you. As long as you don't trust and commit your life to Christ, you will never really appeal to God for salvation. You will keep trying to do it yourself.

Then he backs up and says a person cannot believe unless they hear, and he says a person cannot hear unless someone preaches. A person cannot preach unless they've been sent.

- **Evangelism**

I think we are making a mistake today. Most churches have devised evangelism around the strategy of what takes place in church. But in many of our churches, worship isn't about Him anymore; it's about the people in the community. So we've toned everything down in the church. We can't preach doctrinal messages or sing doctrinal songs anymore because it's about them. Worship is never about them; it isn't even about those of us in the pews; it is about one person only, and that is God. That is why Hardin Baptist Church will never offer seeker sensitive services on Sunday morning. It's not going to happen, because Sunday morning isn't about anyone but God.

The Church has decided to let evangelism be done with the Church gathered instead of the Church scattered. But if you read the New Testament, evangelism was done when the Church was scattered, not when the Church gathered. I am not saying people can't get saved when the Church gathers, that is glorious. But have you noticed who the people in our churches are that are getting saved? It is normally our children, family members, and friends that we can get to the church service. Other than that, no one is getting saved in our services because

they aren't here. I don't think God designed it to be done in church, I think He designed evangelism to be done out in the world. I don't think He commanded the Church to gather the world together in a place and anoint a worship leader and a preacher to bring the gospel. God ordained the discipling of the nations to take place out there. That is why He told us to go into the world. He didn't call the world to go into the Church and get what they need. He called the Church to take what they need out to where they are.

- **Authority given to the Church**

I want to keep this in context, but we will discover in the next lesson that Israel doesn't have an excuse for not believing in the Messiah because they have been given a witness. They have been given the gospel and they have rejected it! Paul is saying don't blame God because He didn't elect all of Israel! Israel is responsible for their damnation, not God! I want you to see the responsibility that we play in the salvation of the world. Don't hear this as taking credit for the salvation of the world, but God, who is sovereign, has ordained the means to the end, and that is His Church must share the good news of what happened on a hill over 2000 years ago with the world. The people who hear that message must believe that message. When they believe that message, they will appeal to God for salvation. The moment they appeal to God for salvation, no matter where or who they are, God brings them into a right relationship with Him. He changes them from a sinner to a saint and transforms them into who He wants them to be. They will live out a change until God calls them home. We are not responsible in this area for whether a sinner believes or not, but we are responsible for them hearing the gospel. Jesus said that if the Father sent Me, so I send you; He commissioned the Church. In Matthew 28, before He ever told the Church to go into the world, He said that all authority had been given to Him in heaven and on earth. That authority has been given to us as a Church.

Quite often my wife sends me to town to get something. We are 12 miles out of town, so when she really needs something, she asks me to go. The first thing I usually say is that I don't have enough money to get it. So she gets into her billfold and gives it to me, or tells me to use the credit card. Now get this picture; I have been sent and I now have the authority to get what she has sent me to get. I leave the house, commissioned, sent, with the authority to pick up a certain item, and I almost get to my destination when I look to my left and see Town and Country Yamaha. You know my heart, I love fast machines! I used to race motorcycles and Kory has raced them all over the nation. A lot of times I just have to stop and look at the new motorcycles that have come out. Now, when I leave there I notice that McKeel Equipment has put all their new tractors and combines out. You know how much I love the farm, and though I know Daddy will probably never get a new tractor, I whip in there and look at it all. I just imagine what it would be like to drive one of those big, new combines! As I drive farther, I see Murray Supply. They just have everything a farm kid needs. I love to stop and stroll through that store. When I get up to the court square I see Corn Austin, and you know how I love a new suit. If I go a little further, wow, there is the Dairy Queen! I cannot tell you how many times I went to town for my wife, had the authority to get what she needed, and then got almost home and remembered that I forgot to get it! Have you ever done that? I specifically went for one thing, got all the way home, and forgot all about her thing because I was enjoying my thing. I learned after a few times to turn around and go back to get it, no matter where I was. So now I have got it, I get home, walk through the door, and here is what I hear, "What took you so long?" I really want to say, "They didn't have it!" But I learned not to lie to her! I learned to say, "Honey, I got distracted and I forgot what you sent me after."

That is the situation in the Church. As a Christian, we have been sent, but we still live in a flesh. We live in a world that constantly reminds of

all the things we like to do. The next thing you know, I get to doing what I want to do, and then I forget what God sent me to do. Sometimes it takes a long time for this to dawn on you. It is really ok to like motorcycles, farming, golfing, hunting, or reading, sewing, or working. We have those desires because if it weren't for them, most of us would never be around anyone who didn't know Christ. I believe that God wired some of us the way He did because we are the one who has been sent to a certain person. I am not responsible for that person believing or not, but I am responsible on whether they hear or not.

- **A Runner for God**

The phrase, "*how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news*", is not talking about preachers. It is talking about people who deliver the message of good news. It was used in the ancient world to talk about that runner who would run a long distance to deliver a message from a king to another city.

In 490 BC, Persia invaded Greece. The Persian army came into the harbor near a small town called Marathon and so the town sent out runners. They ran to Athens, and from Athens they sent runners to go to Sparta and throughout the Greek country. They asked for aid and help. History says that one man ran from Sparta and back in two days; a 75 mile trek through mountainous terrain. That man's name was Phidippides. When the Greeks stood against the Persians at Marathon and turned them back, Phidippides immediately headed out for a 26 mile trek from Marathon to Athens. In 1896 when the modern Olympics were created, the marathon run, 26.2 miles, was instigated to honor Phidippides. History says that after running 75 miles, and then running continuously uphill for 26 miles to bring the news of the victory over the Persians, he came into the city of Athens saying, "We have won, we have won!" He then carried the message to the government leader, bowed before him, and said, "Sir, we have won." After saying those

words, he collapsed and died. We know now that it was probably from heat exhaustion.

The city of Athens will not know whether Phidippides feet are beautiful or not until they know if he is bringing good news or bad news. The word "*beautiful*" in English translates a Greek word that literally means 'in an appointed manner, or at the right time.' Instead of "*how beautiful are the feet*", it should probably be translated 'how timely are the feet of those who bear good news.' The city of Athens was in despair, and they were wondering if the Persians would march on their city in a few days. All of their men were now at Marathon in battle. If it fell, then Athens would probably fall too. They were waiting to see if the outcome was going to be good or bad. Then here comes Phidippides; how timely were his words! Once he delivered it, he died.

When you first hear that story, your first reaction is how horrible! But it hit me that it was good that he delivered the message and then died, rather than dying somewhere on a hill miles from where he was supposed to be. He died victoriously because he delivered the message to whom it was sent. My question for us is will we die before we deliver the message, or after we deliver the message? I don't think it will be good to know that we have been commissioned to take the gospel to a person and not fulfill it. I don't want to die before, I want to die after. Can you imagine how you would feel if your mailman, who has been authorized to deliver your mail, decided to keep it and drive around with it? He just heads out every morning with our mail and just enjoys himself. He stops at the grocery, the restaurant, the mall, and at the end of the day, he still has our mail. We would be calling the post office and waging a complaint! I really wonder if the world doesn't have a complaint against the Church. It is time to stop keeping this really good news to yourself. You didn't have anything to do with the battle; it was won by God 2000 years ago in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. You are just a runner for God, announcing that we have won!

