

Note to the reader: Romans 10:14-15 is commonly read by Christians as God urging the Church to send out more missionaries ("... *How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news*"). But in its context, Paul is actually continuing his discussion about God's decisions regarding His past and current relations with Israel and now Gentiles (*I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation ... I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me* -- Romans 10:19-20).

So what Paul is saying in regard to Israel, is that missionaries – the prophets - have already been sent to Israel (c.f. verse 18), but only a remnant of Israel has obeyed the message given to them to share (c.f. Vs. 16 "*not all,*" implies that some have), Thus God is now turning to the Gentiles to carry his message forward.

The conclusion to Paul's argument begins in chapter 11; God has not rejected Israel, a remnant remains faithful, and one day will be restored to their place of honor (c.f. 11:25-26). But until that time Israel, as a nation, has been "hardened" until the full number of Gentiles – as long ago planned - comes into God's family.

But there is still an application that we Christians can take from chapter 10:11-21, which is that **for believers, proclaiming the Gospel is a required part of the entire package of our "confessing" Jesus.** If we believe in our hearts then our proclamation of our faith to whosoever will listen is where we give our confession. To say it in reverse, **how can we claim to believe in Jesus if we are unwilling to confess him to those who need to hear?** This is where today's sermon will focus.

(the sermon)

Beautiful Feet: Why we are all are called to be missionaries. Romans 10:11-21, 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 Ephesians 6:15 Adapted from: "Fancy Footwork" by Jeff Strite @ SermonCentral.Com

Leonardo da Vinci was painting one of his great masterpieces of art. For a long period of time, a young student stood next to him watching the master work as the painting evolved in front of him. The student was awed by da Vinci's technique and was observing him in hopes of picking up some of the master's skill.

Just before finishing the painting, da Vinci turned to the student and gave him the brush saying "*Now, you finish it.*" The student backed away and protested that he wouldn't dream of touching the Master's work, but da Vinci said, "*Will not what I have done inspire you to do your best?*"

As you read thru the Bible you sense the work of a Master. You can see Jesus in every book of Scripture. And you can see the message of Christ's coming in every stroke of the brush.

- Throughout the Old Testament you hear that: Someone is coming!
- And in Gospels you can read that: Someone has come!

- Then in the remainder of the New Testament we hear: Someone has not only come... But He is coming again, spread the news!

Throughout the Scriptures you get the impression that God has created this great masterpiece... and then – almost like a still small voice in the back of your mind – you sense that God has (in a manner of speaking) has stepped aside and handed us the brush, saying *now finish it.*

*Go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of
the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and
teaching them everything I have commanded you.*
Matthew 28:18

These were Jesus last words before he lifted off to Heaven; I am sure that he meant them.

There's an old fable - about a conversation between God and his angels. Jesus had just risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. The angels were curious about this new thing that Jesus had died and risen from the dead to establish – the church. And they asked all kinds of questions about how God was going to get it started.

In the course of the conversation, it became obvious that the success of this new venture depended heavily upon the men that had walked with Jesus and had been His disciples.

One of the angels laughed and said "You've got to be kidding! It depends on these guys? These men are not well educated... they're not particularly brave... they've been misfits and failures all their lives. And you're telling us that these men are the key to whether Your church survives or not. What happens if they fail? Do you have a plan B?"

looking steadily at the angel, God replied "No, there is no plan B. This is THE PLAN.

This passage in Romans 10 seems to imply the same thing:

How are they to call on one
in whom they have not believed?
And how are they to believe in one
of whom they have never heard?
And how are they to hear
without someone to proclaim him?
Romans 10:14

You see, you and I are plan "A." There is no other plan.

God Will do His part in reaching the people around us but it's obvious that God expects us to do our part in sharing His message with them.

In fact, He's gone so far as to tell us that people cannot believe in Jesus if they've not heard of Him --- from people like us. The salvation of others might just hinge on whether they hear about Jesus from us. Now, while I sincerely believe that God's plans will not be hampered by our failures, obviously He has given us a role that He is counting on us to play.

As a poet once phrased it ...

"They will not come, they must be brought.

They will not seek, they must be sought.

They will not learn, they must be taught."

(Shane VanNatter)

Essentially, that's what Paul is saying Romans 10:14. "*How can they believe in Jesus if they've not heard of Him through us.*"

Our part in God's plan for sharing His Good News is so significant, He declares that the very feet of those who tell others about Jesus are beautiful.

Have any of you ever taken part in a "foot washing?" Did you ever notice that people really don't want to take their shoes off? They are uncomfortable having you see... or smell their feet. They don't think of their feet as pretty, let alone beautiful! And that is the response in our modern, antiseptic clean age! Think of the rough, calloused, dirty sandaled feet of those early Christians walking to the ends of the Earth, sharing God's Good News. – Beautiful Feet!

God says: If you and I share the message of Jesus with others, EVEN our feet are beautiful to Him.

And Jesus tells us "... there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:10

In other words, when we share our faith with others - when we tell others what Jesus means to us - this pleases God more than you or I can even imagine. The very courts of heaven explode in jubilation, and delight

You and I are part of the plan.

God has handed us the brush saying, "*Will not what I have done inspire you to do your best?*"

This is what the apostle Paul got so excited about in his letter to the Corinthians. Reading between the lines, you get the sense that a critic has accused Paul of trying to make his living as a preacher (preaching was not a paid profession back then). Paul's response was that he dare not "Not preach the gospel" – that he was under obligation (to Jesus) to freely share the Gospel with all who would listen. He concluded,

I have become all things to all people,
so that I might by any means save some.
I do it all for the sake of the gospel,
so that I may share in its blessings.
1 Corinthians 9:23

Becoming all things to all people so that we might have the privilege of sharing God's Good News with them and thus participating with God in their salvation. That is what God expects of all His children. *How are they to hear, without someone to proclaim him?*

Now, let me share a few thoughts with you that should help you understand what God is thinking here.

1st - God believes in us...

God believes that we are capable of telling others the "Good News" about Jesus. He isn't asking us to recite all the books of the Bible, or to give the theological implications of sanctification and justification. ALL we have to talk about is the good news. In other words, what has Jesus done for you????

As the famous atheist, Fredrick Nietzsche once said: "Show me that you are redeemed, and I will believe in your Redeemer." Whether or not he was being honest, it is nonetheless true: If we can show others that faith works – if we can tell others how Jesus has made a difference in our lives... then maybe they will believe.

(pause...)

"But Pastor – what if I can't talk real well? What if I'm not sure I could tell someone enough about Jesus to help them?" Well... that's ok. Until you can find a way to tell others about what Jesus has done in your life, you might have to become a little inventive. You might have to find a "creative" way to share Jesus. Roy Cram told me

last month that in Liberty Station, after he thanked a Veteran for his service – as he always does with everyone he sees - the guy returned to his table to give him a baseball and a card. The card said, *let me give you something that means more to me than baseball Good News! God loves you.* Then the card went on to invite him to trust Christ as his savior. A witness given without a word being spoken. And Roy got a baseball to remember it by.

D.L. Moody once told the story of a wealthy London banker who loved Jesus deeply... but couldn't tell others about his faith in a way that he felt was convincing. So, what he did instead was, on the days of a Revival he would hire a Hanson Cab to take him to the event and then send the driver in while he held the reins of the horse.

So if you haven't figured out yet how to talk to others you can still find a way to get the message to them... you just may have to be a little inventive. I hear painted rocks are all the rage these days. You can paint "smile God loves you" on one side and "call me, let me tell you why," But you need to remember: God believes you can do it and He is counting on you to do it – no plan B.

2ndly... you don't have to do this alone.

Jesus tells us that the Spirit of God is working behind the scenes. Jesus said that, when the Spirit came, His job was to "...*convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:*" John 16:8. So you can be sure that when you talk to others about Jesus, God's Spirit has been softening them up well ahead of time.

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Romans 10:15
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Now let's think about this "beautiful feet" idea for a moment. ... I believe there's a reason why God uses the imagery of feet here in Romans 10.

Feet? Feet?... what's so significant about our feet? I mean... it's not our feet that tells about Jesus... that would be our head and our mouth.

But then, as I began to think about it, I realized there was probably a very good reason why God talked our feet in this passage:

First, Feet come First: we have to have the walk, before we talk. Many people talk a good talk... but they don't walk a good walk. The message has no power, if the

messenger doesn't walk with Jesus. What do we call people who talk a good talk, but don't walk the walk???? Hypocrites – mask wearing actors. We've got to walk the walk for our talk to have any impact.

2ndly, my feet determine my direction. I can turn my head to the left or the right and still go straight ahead (illustrate by walking across the stage while moving head from side to side). The direction of my head doesn't determine where I'm going. But once my feet are set on a path – that's where I'm going. My feet determine what direction I'm going in.

When you ask a high school student what he wants to be when he grows up, he might reply "I don't know." The reason he'd say that is because he has no goal set in his mind. His feet aren't set on a path yet. He has no direction in his life. BUT, once he makes up his mind what he's going to do with his life... once that becomes the focus of what he wants to do... he'll pursue that goal no matter what the obstacle – no matter what barrier he might face. Why? Because his feet are set upon the path and he WILL attain his goal.

Likewise, if our feet are set on the path of sharing with others about Jesus... if that is truly the goal that is set in our hearts... then we'll strain for that objective no matter what barrier or objection or obstacle we may face.

Lastly, Feet are personal! I can't divorce myself from my feet. I can't send my feet somewhere that I can't go myself. I have to go where my feet go.

- Notice, God doesn't say: "How beautiful is the tract that you hand out" (even tho' tracts may be very effective).
- Or "How beautiful is the door hanger that you leave" (tho' those door hangers might influence some people).
- Or "How beautiful is the e-mail that you forward" (tho' there are many good e-mails that can change lives).

He says "How beautiful are your feet." What does that mean? **It means that people are won to Christ because we are willing to be where they are.**

A couple of years ago Newsweek had an article on Religion and Street Gangs. They interviewed a Pentecostal preacher named Rivers. When he first moved into this neighborhood, Rivers couldn't get anyone to listen to him. So he sought out a local drug dealer named Selvin... and that drug dealer gave Rivers a lesson in why God was losing to gangs in the battle for the souls of inner city kids.

"Selvin explained. "You come for a short while and then you go away, But I'm there when Johnny goes out for a loaf of bread for Mama. I'm there, you're not. I win, you lose, It's all about being there."

When Jesus sought to save people, he walked with them he talked with them, ate supper with them. He befriended the prostitutes and the tax collectors and the dregs of society because they were the ones that would best understand their own need for His message. He spent time with them. He didn't join in with their sinful behavior, but He showed His love for them in being with them.

Hears the take home from today's message. I'll give it to you in another illustration.

Author Doug Nichols, Nichols tells this story:

"While serving with Operation Mobilization in India in 1967, tuberculosis forced me into a sanitarium for several months. I did not yet speak the language, but I tried to give Christian literature written in their language to the patients, doctors, and nurses.

Everyone politely refused. I sensed many weren't happy about a rich American (to them all Americans are rich) being in a free, government-run sanitarium. (They didn't know I was just as broke as they were!).

The first few nights I woke around 2:00 A.M. coughing. One early morning during my coughing spell, I noticed one of the older and sicker patients across the aisle trying to get out of bed. He would sit up on the edge of the bed and try to stand, but in weakness would fall back into bed.

I didn't understand what he was trying to do. He finally fell back into bed exhausted. I heard him crying softly.

The next morning I realized what the man had been trying to do. He had been trying to get up and walk to the bathroom! The stench in our ward was awful. Other patients yelled insults at the man. Angry nurses moved him roughly from side to side as they cleaned up the mess. One nurse even slapped him. The old man curled into a ball and wept.

The next night I again woke up coughing. I noticed the man across the aisle sit up and again try to stand. Like the night before, he fell back whimpering.

I don't like bad smells, and I didn't want to become involved, but I got out of bed and went over to him. When I touched his shoulder, his eyes opened wide with fear. I smiled, put my arms under him, and picked him up. He was very light due to old age and advanced TB. I carried him to the washroom, which was just a filthy, small room with a hole in the floor. I stood behind him with my arms under his armpits as he took care of himself. After he finished, I picked him up, and carried him back to his bed. As I laid him down, he kissed me on the cheek, smiled, and said something I couldn't understand.

The next morning another patient woke me and handed me a steaming cup of tea. He motioned with his hands that he wanted a tract. As the sun rose, other patients approached and indicated they also wanted the booklets I had tried to distribute before. Throughout the day nurses, interns, and doctors asked for literature.

Weeks later an evangelist who spoke the language visited me, and as he talked to others he discovered that several had put their trust in Christ as Savior as a result of reading the literature.

What did it take to reach these people with the gospel? It wasn't health, the ability to speak their language, or a persuasive talk. I simply took a trip to the bathroom. (Leadership, Vol. 15, no. 2.)

What won these people was the fact, that when he walked, he walked like Jesus. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."