

Happy Feet

Romans 10:14-15

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There is some irony in a church hosting a Missions Sunday. It reminds me of the oft asked question by children on Mother's Day or Father's Day, *when is it Kids' Day?* What's the answer? Say it with me—*every day is Kids' Day.*

Truly, every Sunday is Missions Sunday and every day is Missions Day. Ever since Jesus commissioned the apostles with these words, *Go and make disciples of all nations*, every day is Missions Day. Or at least it should be. When God's people are on their A game, every day is a gospel day. Every day is a mission day. Our lives lived as Christians should engender holy curiosity in the world around us about the hope within us.

When sinners respond to the gospel and receive and believe in Jesus, what a wonderful thing that is! For example, last Sunday at our Chinese congregation, two women received Christ as their Savior. Two out of 50 people. If that same ratio happened across our whole church, 132 people would become Christians. What would you call that? That would be a revival of epic proportions.

Two women became Christians. That's simple to say, but there's so much involved. A whole chain of events and effort must be put forth for every convert to Christ. Romans examines each step of salvation in reverse order. He reverse engineers conversion. Reverse what? What's reverse engineering? This son of a mechanical engineer will be happy to tell you. It's when you start with the finished product and then take it apart in order to understand how it works.

For example, people have been trying to do this with the Egyptian pyramids for centuries. How did they do it? They start with the pyramid and go backwards block by block to figure out how they built them. Paul does that with salvation. Step by step, backwards.

"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!'" (Romans 10:13–15 ESV)

Let's see what this passage means in the context of Paul's sweeping argument first, then we will talk about how it applies to missions, evangelism, and beautiful feet.

From 9:30 through the end of chapter 11 Paul is addressing how Israel failed to achieve right standing with God while the Gentiles have succeeded. The Jews began with incredible privileges—the law of God, the prophets, the covenants, the miracles, and many other things. But they largely rejected Jesus even though he is the whole goal of the law (10:4).

The Gentiles (non-Jews) had few spiritual privileges and yet they have achieved salvation by faith. That's an unusual thing to find in our world, the privileged failing and the under privileged succeeding. Why? Because the Jews pursued right standing with God by their DNA and obedience to the Old Testament law, NOT by faith in Jesus.

Perhaps the last refuge or excuse the Jews have is, *nobody ever told us*. Romans 10:13-15 refutes this argument. Look ahead to verse 17, "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.'" (Romans 10:17-18)

Jesus' life and ministry were the talk of the whole country. For a couple decades apostles and Christians had spread the gospel throughout the Jewish people. The problem wasn't a lack of hearing, their problem was a lack of listening.

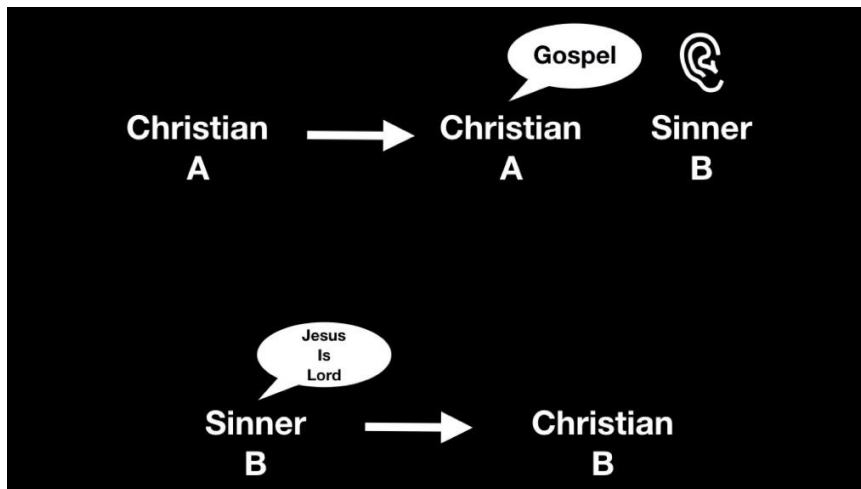
Wives, you know how this goes. When you ask your husband to do something and he doesn't do it, what is the problem? Your clear exposition and explanation? No. He isn't listening. Did I just lose my man card? Let me get it back, husbands, when you mention to your wife the game is on today, what does she hear? Absolutely nothing. Did I just get my card back?

Israel heard all about Jesus and God's plan for salvation. It had been the talk of the nation and the Roman Empire. The problem? They weren't listening. Their pride in their Abrahamic DNA plugged their ears. Their self-righteousness plugged their hearts. They refused to call on the name of the Lord and be saved. In the larger context, that's how this text fits.

But here we are on Missions Sunday and other than the Great Commission, this may be the most often used passage of Scripture at Missions conferences and missionary commissioning services. Why? It reverse engineers salvation from a person trusting in Christ all the way back to the person being sent to share the gospel. Here are the main steps.

- Call on Jesus**
- Believe in Jesus**
- Hear about Jesus**
- Person shares the gospel**
- Person sent to share the gospel**

The chronological order is the opposite (see below):



Christian A is sent. Christian A shares the gospel with sinner B. Sinner B hears about Jesus. Sinner B believes in Jesus. Sinner B becomes Christian B by calling on the name of the Lord.

Paul, if Romans wasn't hard enough, why do this to us? Why backwards evangelism? Here's why. Because he is emphasizing the urgency of gospel hearing as the only way to gospel believing. How do we know this? His summary is verse 17, "*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*"

No salvation without gospel understanding is the truth that has sent thousands of missionaries into every quadrant of the world. There are thrilling stories of David Livingstone, Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael, Eric Liddell, Jim Elliot, and thousands whose stories we don't know. Why such effort and sacrifice? How can people be saved if they never hear of Jesus? The answer is, they can't. Therefore, there is urgency to equip, resource, and send ambassadors of the gospel.

Paul himself represents this paradigm. Paul was essentially a pastor at the church in Antioch. The Holy Spirit made it clear that Paul and Barnabas were to be sent.

"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.'" (Acts 13:1-2)

Paul's own story is one of sending, going, and sharing. He is urging more sending and more going. To that end, I have three urgencies from this text that all Christians must cultivate in our hearts and in our church.

Three Urgencies for God's people

God's sovereignty never negates gospel sharing

Many of us are still trying to wrap our minds around the sovereign grace of God in Romans 9. In some senses we always will because there are mind-bending doctrines taught there. But you don't want to read Romans 9 in any way negating the urgency of gospel-sharing because it clearly didn't for Paul. If God's sovereignty means evangelism is irrelevant then why would Paul have suffered all that he did in order to share the gospel? Was he delusional? No. God's sovereignty not only doesn't negate the need for our personal involvement in evangelism, it empowers it.

Perhaps you have heard my favorite illustration of this, but I'll share it again. If this Easter my family does an Easter egg hunt and we tell our girls, *Hey, there may or may not be Easter eggs in the yard. Let us know if you find any.* How long do they last and how hard to they search? But if we say, *We guarantee there are Easter eggs in the yard for you; go get 'em!* What sort of effort do they put forth? They search till every last one is found.

God's sovereignty is God's guarantee that there are elect "eggs" all over the world. This motivates us to share the gospel widely and broadly to find every one of them.

*Really? Why share if God is sovereign? Because **God has ordained the end as well as the means to the end.*** The end is heaven with people from every tribe, tongue, and language. The means is the orchestration of a thousand pre-salvation circumstances for the sinner to hear the gospel and believe. Who does the pre-work? The preparing? The resourcing? The sending? God's people do. There is no sense at all of sitting back and letting

God's sovereignty do it. That is a flawed doctrine of sovereignty. No. God has ordained the end as well as the means.

If you "ordain" that you are going on vacation to Austin, Texas, what do you do? *Do? Why would I have to do anything?* It's ordained that I'm going to Austin, Texas on vacation. Let's see how that goes for you. The person of understanding begins checking airline flights and rental cars, books a hotel, and makes arrangements.

Practically, what does that look like in evangelism? It looks like this for two women in our Chinese congregation:

More and Better Vision → Bethelonians give \$\$ and prayers → God provides Pastor Tim Chen → Hours and Hours of labor → Pastor Tim preaches → Women hear the gospel → Women trust in Christ.

Praise God for their salvation, but can we see how it happened through a group of elders who started this ball rolling, and God's people who labored in prayer, gave money, advertised in the Chinese community, held untold meetings and a thousand other things? Gospel response requires gospel hearing and gospel hearing requires gospel sharing and gospel sharing requires gospel sending and gospel sending requires gospel-loving Christians who treasure the gospel and love the lost and want everyone to know King Jesus.

Who shared the gospel with those two women? Tim Chen. Tim Chen and his wife Daphne supporting Tim. Tim Chen and 50 other Chinese Christians at our campus there. Tim Chen and 10 years of Chinese student host families in our church. Tim Chen and elders who envisioned this. Tim Chen and hundreds who gave to *More and Better*. Tim Chen and thousands of Bethelonians who have supported in prayer. Tim Chen and the Holy Spirit. Tim Chen and a sovereignly electing God who ordained in eternity past these two women would be objects of his grace. Tim Chen and Jesus who bore these two women's sin-guilt on the cross. Tim Chen and centuries of faithful witnesses passing the faith on.

Don't abuse God's sovereignty as an excuse NOT to share. It is what motivates us to share Jesus as far and wide as possible.

All Christians are "preachers"

"As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'" (Romans 10:15)

This is a quote from Isaiah 52 where Isaiah speaks of a herald who goes to the destroyed city of Jerusalem and declares, *Our God reigns!* For the stragglers and squatters in a destroyed city, how do they hear that message? *Yeah, right. If our God reigns, it sure doesn't look like it.* Is the herald's job to change their minds? No. A herald is called to herald. To declare. To communicate. Often in gospel evangelism it feels like we are shouting in a destroyed city the love, kindness, and grace of God. Many people will scoff. Our responsibility is not to do the saving, but to do the sharing.

If there is a downside to Missions Sundays, it is the misconception that missions is what our missions partners do, and we support them with money and prayers. No. Mission and gospel sharing and gospel neighboring are *all our* responsibility. Jesus' Great Commission is for all of us. Is it urgent that Hindus in south India be reached with the gospel through Abraham Thomas' efforts? Yes! Any more urgent than Hindus who live next to you, or Muslims, or the unreligious or those hostile to the gospel? It's all critical.

Friend, in your home, neighborhood, work, or school, how goes the heralding?

Our feet are beautiful when the gospel (to us) is wonderful

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (Romans 10:15)

"Preach" here is not simply sermon-type preaching but it means *to herald. To share. To communicate*. Most gospel sharing of impact is interpersonal. Person to person.

This is striking because of all our body parts, our feet are the most *not* beautiful. And our feet look much better than first-century feet that walked in sandals everywhere. They didn't have *Nike* gel pad shoes or *Dr. Scholl's* inserts. They walked on paths that animals walked. I was recently on Mackinac Island, which is both charming and stinky with horse manure everywhere you go. It's hard to have beautiful feet at Mackinac and frankly, anywhere else.

What makes our feet beautiful? When our feet take us into relationships with people that we love and earn the right to share the gospel with them. The mouth goes where the feet go. Did anyone leave their mouth at home today? Beautiful feet are connected to Christians whose hearts are treasuring Christ and his gospel.

Can we be honest? Why are we so often quiet? Why don't we share the good news of Jesus when we will share any other good news? The reason we don't share the good news of Jesus is that often we don't treasure it as good news. It's news. Maybe old news. But too often not good news or not good enough to share.

The people who have been most effective in their evangelism are those for whom the gospel is great news. *"The feet are said to be beautiful because their movements betray the character of the message being brought."*¹

There is a kids' movie about penguins called, *Happy Feet*. This little penguin can't help but dance. The dance is infectious to the other penguins. That's the sense of this verse. Do you have gospel-happy feet? This isn't urging us to have beautiful feet, rather it is urging us to so treasure the gospel of Jesus that happiness in Jesus causes happiness to flow out of our mouths. Happy Christians have happy feet that take the infectious gospel dance across the street and around the world. *"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"* (Romans 10:15)

Can I ask a question that challenges my soul too? Is the reason you don't share the gospel because to you it's not good news or not good enough news? If so, let's repent together on this. Think of the effect of a church-wide repentance for our devaluing of the gospel and our silence in sharing it.

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¹ John Murray, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: Romans*, p. 59.