

ROMANS 10:11-15 "How Beautiful Are the Feet Of Those Who Bring Good News"

The better part of Romans chapter 9 dealt with the Sovereignty of God in the sense that He is in total control of the entire universe, including man. Paul dealt with God's choosing and electing a people for Himself, and so as to take away any charge that God is unfair in His dealings with man, Paul says in Rom 9:21 "Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?"

There is no question that our Sovereign God's plan for mankind is in His hand and His plans cannot be thwarted. However, to simply teach this truth and not incorporate the teaching of man's responsibility is to find ourselves neglecting what our Sovereign God clearly teaches about man.

And as we come to chapter ten Paul now begins to open the door of understanding to what our Sovereign God demands of man so that man may enter into an eternal relationship with the Creator.

This is where we left off last week as Paul exclaimed with a passionate plea:

Rom 10:9-10 "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

With your heart you believe. In other words, it's not with your mouth that you believe. Simply saying Jesus Christ is my Savior is not what Paul means. He's saying that your heart, or your inner man, fully embraces the truth that Jesus Christ is God, He's Lord, He's Savior and that without Him we would be lost.

Believing with your heart intimates a no turning back attitude. It's a giving up of your will to embrace His will, which is to love Him and serve Him above all. The heart follows the One who gives life. And when our hearts embrace Jesus the rest of our being will be dedicated, and in full harmony with, seeking Him and following Him.

Of course, this begs the question; how can the heart believe when the heart is desperately sick and dead as both Jeremiah and Solomon confirm.

Jeremiah 17:9 ⁹ "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

^{NAU} **Ecclesiastes 9:3** This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they *go* to the dead.

To suggest that anyone's heart is naturally inclined to seek God for salvation as they confess, Jesus is Lord, just does not understand the clear teaching of Scripture.

Romans 3:11-12 ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

So, how can any heart seek after God? Only that heart that God has miraculously brought back to life.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 ²⁶ "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

This is why it is essential that God chooses a people out for His own possession and this is why Paul taught earlier that unless God does the choosing all men would perish.

Romans 8:29-30 ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Therefore, Jesus Christ doesn't simply make men savable but actually and effectually saves His people and this is why when the God-transformed heart believes, the mouth confesses because we can now hear the words of our Shepherd who calls us.

Joh 10:27-28 "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."

This is the God in whom we trust with all our hearts and when we follow Him by faith our lives will begin to come into conformity to the life of Jesus Christ. This process is sanctification. It's a process that starts with belief from the heart that God raised Christ from the dead so that we might have life.

And it's a process that continues with belief from the heart that shows itself in submission to God, Who is able to make us into the image of His Son, with the express purpose of using us to lift up the name of Christ in our lives as our lives, which includes our lips, confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Now what does all of this mean for us in a practical way? It means that when we turn away from a life of sin and rebellion, and we turn to God by faith in Christ, there is a reward.

This reward is not only future, it is present. And that's part of what Paul means when he says in Rom 10:11 "As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." [Isaiah 28:16]

The NAS puts it this way. "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."

This verse is actually taken from Isa 28:16 "So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed."

The idea here is that if we believe with our hearts that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and our lives begin to come into conformity with that truth, as we leave behind the old and move towards the new, which Christ has created in us, then we have an assurance that we haven't believed in vain, especially when this life would try to convince us otherwise.

God says to you and me, 'If you believe Me then I will never disappoint you. There will be no reason to be dismayed and I will never put you to shame.'

What happens however, is that the enemy, this world and the trials and temptations we all struggle with, would try to convince us that God is trying to put us to shame, and is trying to place us in dismay

and that God is a disappointing God. In those times we're tempted to lose hope and we begin to question the truth of God's word. And we begin to wonder if this salvation is really cracked up to be all that it says it is.

Enter faith. Our salvation begins with faith, and it continues with faith. But faith in faith is not the answer. Faith must have an object worth believing. The object of our faith is none other than the One who said He loved us and then laid down His life for us.

Can we trust Him? Jesus says, 'you will not be disappointed or dismayed or put to shame if you trust Me. I am a God who keeps My word and I will not let the enemy snatch you out of My hand.'

In the context of this letter to the Romans, Paul's point was that the Jews had arrived at a false conclusion that God was not true to His word, and He had disappointed them by not being the God of their own choosing.

The Lord had always extended His love and mercy to Israel, but instead of believing with their hearts they simply went through the motions and created their own way of relating to God through the use of the law.

Instead of being a light to the nations the Israelites extinguished the flame through unbelief and rejected the one true God by replacing Him with a system of works in which there was no light, only darkness.

Paul then explains that since the Jews would not be that light to the Gentiles, God would go directly to the Gentiles who were always in God's design to share in His salvation.

Rom 10:12-13 "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." [Joel 2:32]

All people of the world are given the opportunity to know this one true God. But it's a relationship that is by faith, from the heart, in the only Savior Jesus Christ. Most of the Jews missed this.

What's interesting about how Paul relays this information is that he uses two O.T. prophets to teach this truth. It was Isaiah who wrote, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame." And now the prophet Joel would

say, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
(Joel 2:32)

Both Jew and Gentile may have eternal life and so we're told in verse 12, "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,..."

Again, I like the NAS on the end of this verse which says, "abounding in riches for all who call upon Him."

What kind of riches does God have in mind? Some would have us believe that God's riches must necessarily include wealth. We're the Kings kids and we deserve the best. The best houses, the best cars, the best vacations, the best of all this world has to offer.

Though God is the giver of all good things, we must never relegate His gifts as being primarily worldly possessions. The context here in Romans is speaking of an eternal relationship with God by faith, which has, as its ultimate outcome, a spiritual reality which is a Kingdom whose builder and architect is God, not the architects of this world who can only offer a temporal thrill at best.

This present cursed world is not our home. Though we live in this world, we are not of this world. We must never become comfortable in this world to the extent that we equate our relationship with God as a relationship based on comfort.

This is a trap that Christians must avoid. The trap is that if we think that eternal life doesn't involve the cost of living by faith, despite hardships, then we'll always be looking for a worldly rainbow that may not materialize. And if that is our focus we will be disappointed because we'll be looking at our circumstance which we expect to be comfortable, and take our eyes off of the One who says, 'I will not disappoint you.'

A relationship with Christ is free, but it's not without cost. The reason is that this temporal world and the trappings of this world are always in competition with the eternal and the two can never be fully reconciled until that last day when Christ finally judges the world and then renews this present world into the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells

Our eyes are not to be focused on this present world to the exclusion of the next. That doesn't mean we don't recognize this world and it doesn't mean we don't live in it. But we live in it with the express purpose of being lights and witnesses to the world that

there is far more in store for all who would embrace Jesus Christ who gives eternal life.

In this section of Scripture the Pulpit Commentary addresses the riches that Christ has for us. It says, "In Christ is wealth adapted to the enrichment of dependent, needy men. He has in himself: 1) Riches of revelation."

In other words, we may know personally the mind of God and His will. It's revealed to us in His word and illumined by the Holy Spirit given to each child of God.

2) "Riches of redemption. We've been redeemed. This is a treasure beyond our imaginations. Being purchased and bought by the living God to share in His eternity is part of the riches we may enjoy today, knowing that we have a hope beyond this world."

3) "Riches of replenishment. Being immortal creatures housed in temporal bodies we need to be replenished and refreshed. In the spiritual sense God knows that our walk with Him is a walk that sometimes grows weary."

The inexhaustible riches of God are always there at our disposal to enable us to walk with God. But they are riches that work in connection with faith in Christ. To neglect to live by faith often short circuits the riches we have at our disposal.

4) "Riches of resurrection. We have all things promised to us for life and godliness because Christ lives. In those times when life becomes hard and faith grows faint and love wanes, go back to the cross and ask yourself the question: Does Christ really love me and does He really care about my situation?"

If you can look into the face of your Risen Savior, who gave His very life to secure a relationship with us, so that we would be able to live with Him forever, then I believe you'll find your answer. If He's given His very life to give us eternal life, will He give us anything less than what is for our best to live in this life until we see Him face to face?

If we can see, by faith, with spiritual eyes, then I believe we'll begin to see and experience the eternal riches He has for us and put those riches into practice by faith.

The abundant life is a life living in those Spiritual riches by faith. Now the world wouldn't consider them riches, but then again they

wouldn't consider God the Father as the Giver of all good gifts, not the least of which is His Son.

Don't be conformed into the thinking of the world, which has as its only reward the things of this world. Be transformed by the renewing of your minds with God's word to think on those things that are eternal. Those are the things that last and the things that God deems important.

The eternal riches that God gives is for those who call upon Him. And as we're told in verse 13... "all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

Now Paul tells us that God has even ordained the means by which men will hear this message.

Rom 10:14-15 "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" [Isaiah 52:7]

These are all rhetorical questions which have the answer implied. The answer is that not only has God secured salvation He has secured the means to that salvation.

Let's go back to verse 14.... "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

If we were to start backwards with this line of thought we would start with God saying that, 'I will send someone to men so that they can hear about the One I command them to believe in, because without such revelation they can't call upon someone they've never heard of?'

Now this doesn't give an excuse for mankind to say how can I be guilty before God if He didn't send such a messenger to me so that I can hear of His salvation? Man's guilt is not based on whether or not he hears the gospel. Man's guilt is based on his sin against a Holy God, whom God says, 'He has revealed to man through His invisible attributes.'

This is what Paul wrote earlier.

Rom 1:20-21 "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, *so that men are without excuse*. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

And so, man can't accuse God of keeping him in the dark concerning His existence. What Paul is saying here in Romans 10 is that despite man's desire to keep himself in the dark God has chosen to break through that darkness with a message of hope.

And here's how that message is to be delivered. First, I will choose a people out of the world to be "My people," thus the phrase Paul uses earlier in this letter.

Romans 8:29-30 ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son,..."

This is similar to what Paul wrote the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3-4 ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

And so, when the message of hope is delivered through the proclamation of the gospel there is a people who will be given ears to hear this message and then given the faith to believe. But the God-ordained means is through other people, be it written or declared verbally.

And even these people are sent by God in His providence to deliver the message to the entire world, out of which the chosen will hear.

And upon hearing they are enabled by the Holy Spirit to make the choice of fleeing the punishment of their sin through faith in Christ.

Now the one chosen and sent by God is called a preacher. The Greek word here for preacher is *kerusso* and it means to herald. In other words, to make something known. When we think of the word preacher we usually limit it to the office of preacher. One specifically called by God and equipped by God to devote his life to heralding the Good news of Jesus Christ.

And interestingly enough that's the plain meaning of this verse. The Pastor/teacher is called by God to devote his life to heralding the Good news of Jesus Christ with a lost world.

Jesus is the One who sends such a man. Though he may volunteer for such a task it is only as God lays that desire on his heart and calls him out and commissions him that he will go. And if he obeys the call and the commission then God will use him for His purpose of bringing the Gospel.

And what a blessed task that is. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" [Isaiah 52:7]

To a Jew these words meant more than a pleasant thought of Good news being proclaimed. The O.T. prophet Isaiah spoke those words during a time in Israel's history where the northern part of the kingdom had been taken into captivity, and the southern part, Judah, was under constant attack by the Assyrians.

In the context of Isaiah here's what he was telling Israel as they were being assailed on every side.

Isa 52:5-7 "And now what do I have here?" declares the LORD. "For my people have been taken away for nothing, and those who rule them mock," declares the LORD. "And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed. 6 Therefore my people will know my name; therefore in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I." 7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Israel was given the hope that despite their captivity God was in their midst and He would bring them out. For the Jew, at that time, it was not only good tidings it was glorious news. It was a message of hope.

The messenger was Isaiah. But it wasn't limited to Isaiah. That's why Paul quotes it. The analogy is that as good as that news was for Israel there is a good news which is quantum leaps beyond anything that was temporal.

For the man of God called to give such news as a preacher, a herald, there are special blessings. But with such blessings come great responsibility. Part of that responsibility is to equip an army to take this message out into the world. And in that sense we are all preachers. We are all heralds of good news. And God has

given each one of us the privilege of being His ambassador and representative with a glorious message of hope.

If it were left only to an individual among many to bring this great news the news would never go as far as it could with many laboring with him delivering the same message. And in that way all believers get to share in the furthering of the Kingdom of God and participate in the means God has provided in taking this Good news out to the world.

One of the dangers that I see in the church today is that many in the Body of Christ, in this country, have relinquished their responsibility to God to be those heralds of Good news to just a few. 'Let the Pastor, the assistant pastor, youth pastor, maybe the music director and the others who "work" for the church be those heralds. I'm much too busy and ill equipped to take that task on.'

But think for a moment. God says of those who are willing to bring this gospel to the lost that their feet are beautiful. There's the tendency to think that the only response that God has towards man is one of anger.

That's just not true. God actually takes delight in His people. You and I can actually make the Creator of this universe happy, delighted and elated as we walk with Him and after Him in faith and obedience.

We don't serve some emotionless God who sits on a throne with a big frown on His face and who never has a happy moment in His existence. Remember, we were created in His image. You and I have a sense of humor because the God who has a sense of humor built that into us. The God who laughs and the God who smiles on His people is the God who has given us the ability to take delight in each other and delight in the life we have in Him.

And God says, 'when you give back to this lost world the good news I delivered to you, through someone who loved you enough to care about your eternal life, then know for certain that I get excited and exclaim to the host of heaven, how beautiful are the feet of this child of mine who has taken my message of hope and given it to someone else.'

I dare say that most of us in this room, and for that matter in this world, came to Christ through the agency of another believer who was not a Pastor, but simply a concerned child of God who saw

your lost condition and wanted to give you the best news this world has ever known.

The Good news that Jesus Christ, who was promised to the Jews centuries ago, arrived in a small town of Bethlehem, born of a virgin and who grew to be a man who never sinned and who came to die for you and me that we might have life eternal. And we can have life eternal because the grave couldn't hold Him.

And all who would believe in their heart that He is Messiah and their only Redeemer can have this life and experience the riches of His Kingdom even today. It's all by faith. But it's a faith that will never disappoint us because the object of our faith is the eternal God who is called Savior and Lord.

The relationship that He has given you and me in Christ is a special one. And that relationship is one He has designed for us to grow in by His grace as we seek Him and humble ourselves before Him.

You're not just a cog in the big wheel of God's plan. You are a special person who has been personally called by God to fulfill a very special purpose in this world, not the least of which is to be His very own "herald" declaring His greatness and salvation to a dying world.

Heb 13:15-16 "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

I like the idea of knowing that I can actually please my Creator. In all things may we please Him with a life of faith and a life of obedience to His honor and glory as we lift up the name of Christ in this world.