

How Beautiful Are The Feet Of Those Who Bring Good News! <Ro 10:1-21>

Prelude: Let's not become a person who has much knowledge yet cannot evangelize, neither should we become one who is overtly passionate yet unable to bring "the good news" to others. Gospel, intrinsically, is the grace of life. It is not a message that gives man pressure but good news, the most needful message of all God's people who are scattered. Hence, we cannot allow gospel to stay as a form of rigid head knowledge; neither should we decide the need to evangelize by gauging how much a person needs the gospel. In contrary, through prayers, interactions and appropriate witnessing, we need to awaken the hunger and thirst in men's spirit, enable them to discover that they need this gospel very much. Usually, a sincere evangelist may encounter 3 types of dilemmas. First, we cannot see the doors of evangelism, or we cannot find people with hunger and thirst for the gospel. In this, we get disheartened easily, even our hearts may find excuses for ourselves, "you've tried your best, but nobody is willing to listen". From that moment onwards, we do not spend more time exploring the deep and touching life in gospel; we will not think deeper on how to help others realize the problems and emptiness of their lives, and we may remain in a surface understanding of the gospel and thus we can neither receive healing ourselves nor save others. Besides, when we are spreading the gospel, we may fall into a mechanical passion if we are not careful. With this, we may be outcome-centered, thinking that as long as we bring man into conversion prayer, or take part in Christian rituals, it will mean our mission is accomplished. Actually, the most urgent fruit of the gospel and what an evangelist should be most concerned with, is that a person's life truly meets God through the gospel and experiences the transformation of new birth. In evangelizing and shepherding, we must bring men to meet God so that they can truly experience the transformation and assurance of being born again. This is the effect of gospel brought by beautiful feet. Finally, another dilemma an evangelist could face is that he cannot see his loved ones receiving blessing when many others come to Christ; this is similar to Paul as he spread the gospel to various places, but his very own kin still remained hardened. Actually, in this, we should never become disheartened because God is accomplishing things that we cannot see nor imagine. In fact, there are even more blessed people waiting to hear this gospel. We should never remain lost. Instead, we should spread the gospel and let it reach the unsaved people. George Muller prayed for the salvation of 5 of his friends while he was alive – 3 of them believed in the Lord while he was still alive, one converted during his funeral, and the last one yielded to the Lord some time after he passed on. We humans are living in the limitation of time and space; when we do not know about tomorrow, we should face it with the promise and complete the things entrusted to us by the Lord today. If we scratch our head for the outcomes we do not know today, we will lose the greater and more glorious picture instead. Hence, we need to know that this gospel is utterly precious, and it can only be spread in our current lifetime, and a man can only believe when he is alive. May we become blessed evangelists and leave behind beautiful feet that bring good news.

1. Paul's heart's desire was for the Israelites to be saved, but he also knew the reasons why they could not be blessed <10:1-3,12,15>

1) When there are conflicts between what we desire (heart's desire) and the reasons we know (head knowledge), we can only receive liberation through prayers (the help of Holy Spirit)

* Basically, we do not only meet such problems during evangelism. We face similar struggles in all earthly pain and suffering we meet as our hearts cannot pass through it or we cannot understand it. Our heads may know rationally, but it does not mean our hearts can accept. Paul faced similar struggle in the matter of Israelites' salvation but he depended on the help of Holy Spirit (i.e. prayers). Only Holy Spirit can help us under such situation, enable us to understand and accept. Here, we see how Holy Spirit had enabled Paul to understand the profound truth.

2) Holy Spirit enabled Paul to understand 3 revelations (mysteries)

① **Israelites' original problem.** Their ignorant zeal caused them to be further from God. Paul was once an extremely zealous person, and his zeal caused him to persecute the church. How did such extreme temperament arise? It came because he thought that he was zealous for God. How did he become so certain that he had a heart that was zealous for God? Because he had accepted the belief of "man can earn God's righteousness through keeping the law". From here, we know that the incorrect gospel is most poisonous to man - it creates incorrect belief and brings incorrect convictions. There is no experience and temperament of "new birth" in this zeal, thus lacking God's love and righteousness. Actually, that belief "rejects grace and exalts self-salvation", it represents the starting point of all religions that cause man to drift further from God.

② **God's salvation is upon all who call on Him, for there is no difference between peoples.** Actually, it is fundamental that God's salvation is upon all peoples (Jews and Gentiles), God did not favour anyone and told Paul about His heart so that Paul would understand that God's redemption plan does not include any Jewish superiority factors. In fact, the bloodline of God's people is those who "genuinely believe" (in Christ's gospel), there is no distinction between Jews or Gentiles, gender or age, family or kin. This was what Paul was convinced in his heart as he was born as a Jew, it is also the truth that we, who live by the gospel today, should know, so that we will not have personal motive in evangelizing, shepherding or mingling in church, only to be one-hearted in interceding and sacrificing for the people whom God wants to claim.

③ **If so, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.** To a saint who truly receives the gospel as God's heart, his final conclusion remains "this gospel is beautiful, and I will preach it my whole life" no matter how much dilemmas (eg: people resist or do not believe, family and kin remain unblessed, meeting various restrictions, etc) he encounters. Certainly, although this world has sin, and sin leads to the transgressions and hardening of men, God has given us this good news. Therefore, as we live in a world that is full of sin, the only way to survive is to evangelize. Man has hope as long as the gospel is preached. To Paul, as long as the gospel continues to spread, God's chosen people can be revealed and true Israel will be won over from within Israel.

2. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes <10:4-15>

1) The end of the law is not perfect actions, but through faith, enable people to receive "new disposition" in Christ <10:4-5>

* <v5> says the man who does these things will live (be saved) by them. This statement is not wrong by principle, but in practical situations, the depraved humanity is already weak and cannot meet the requirements of the law (live by the original spirit of the law), thus this is also the weakness of the law. The law reveals the standard of God's righteousness but fails to save the people who are already depraved and powerless. In this, God has designed the grace of salvation; that is revealing His righteousness in flesh, the Lord Jesus who is Word became flesh. He fulfilled the requirements of the law (love God and men), sacrificed Himself for His people to clear their debts of sin; after that, through the "faith" given by the Holy Spirit, gives birth to a new disposition that is from God in the elect. This "new disposition" is the substance that fulfills the requirements of the law. In the salvation designed by the Lord, it is absolutely not about "trying hard to meet the requirements of the law through actions or zeal", but it is about a person through faith receives the new disposition from the new birth. From then on, he has new hunger (God's word), new direction (kingdom), new discipline (driven by law), new actions (do for God), and new struggle (fighting the flesh). This is a life that meets the requirements of the law.

2) People who receive this new life has nothing to boast about <10:6-7>

* It is completely God's merit that the new disposition is brought to men through gospel, it is the salvation designed by His loving and compassionate attributes. Therefore, people who can receive God's salvation by faith can never exalt man's self-saving merit in their hearts, saying: **who will ascend into heaven** (a lot of ideologies in human religions are to reveal the extreme piety of self, e.g.: climbing high places to worship and pay respect to god and deities, or seeking the path of salvation. If so, this means it is our own piety that brings Christ down from His throne) or **who will descend into the deep** (in human religions, the channel through which sins can be repaid is to descend into the deep and suffer or be punished, or to suffer much in this life to repay the wrongs a person has done. If so, this suggests that a person's sacrifice can bring Christ up from the dead). Actually, the depraved humanity will create their own methods of salvation or repayment for their sins. But here it says: The Word is near you. It is not found by us ascending high or descending deep into the ocean. Christ had descended

from His throne for us, be with us in this world and became visible to us, died for us, buried, resurrected and ascended to heaven. Is there any man's merit in it which we can boast or work hard towards? All these purely reveal God's merit in taking the initiative to save according to His righteousness and love.

3) Since God has prepared, only by declaring with your mouth and believing in your heart can you receive <10:8-12>

* <v8> says, "This word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart". In other words, this Word reveals to our souls. When we hear it, this is the moment God reveals His salvation to us, we do not need to wait till tomorrow or when anyone approves, neither do we need to wait until we can show certain qualified conditions or any actions that are compatible with the faith. When the gospel message is revealed to us, God is calling our souls to return to Him. Hence, we only need to declare with our mouths Jesus is Lord (He is the proactive Redeemer), and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead (His death and resurrection had paid all of our sins) in order to be saved. Here, we need to know that the "mouth" and "heart" referred to by the Bible is to state that "the inner faith and the outward profession are both one matter". Professing without faith is hypocrisy; faith without professing is also unclear. When the declaration from the mouth and faith in the heart combine, this shows the coming of a new life, it is the act of our soul calling on God, not a feeling or ritual. Today, some people often feel that they have believed, or they have said the conversion prayers many times, but there is no new birth of life within them. Their feeling and conversion have not led to their transformation in their yearnings, direction, discipline, and life - we will then know the true substance of "believing in the heart and professing with the mouth" has not taken place in them. We need to know, it is so important to lead a person towards the idea and experience of a new life. Spiritual experience concerns life, not mechanical. This is also what we, evangelists, should bear in our hearts, if a person converts or believes without clarity, he will not follow the Lord afterwards, not to mention become a disciple. This is the reality a lot of modern churches are facing today.

4) On a practical level, without the one who preaches the gospel or spread the good news, we will not see the emergence of people who call on the Lord <10:13-15>

* When Paul saw God's great redemption plan that does not side anyone, he knew God kept His promise and has always been eagerly anticipating for His people to be brought into the grace of redemption. The final step lies in the people who bring the good news. Try asking: after knowing God's great redemption plan, aside from being in awe, does it lead to our pressing hearts to evangelize? Try thinking, in <Is 52:7>, those who proclaimed that the people were released from slavery in Babylon received such praises, what's more for the people who bring good news that liberate people from sins. When we know through the Word of God that He has not been faithless but remains the God who accomplishes His promise, our only way to experience Him is to take part in the evangelical work God has unfolded for us earnestly. Today, the church commonly has 2 types of problems, one is not evangelizing (remaining in the state of complacency and comfort); secondly, preach the incorrect gospel (as a result, the listeners cannot experience the transformation of being born again). In particular, the tendency of modern churches is replacing the pure gospel with many programmes, entertainments and rituals. We see many people entering the church, but few are calling on the Lord. However, is there any use if we continue to sigh? No matter how few our numbers are, if we are commissioned by God, we will surely preach; only then can people hear, after that believe, and call on the Lord (born again). In these 2000 years, this is how the seeds of life have been passed down till today. Although there are many strategies the churches have adopted to evangelize, the blessed procedure is the only channel through which the old rugged cross is spread. Who then can be commissioned? Actually, gospel is not only a message; it has the power to move and send people forth. When a person is moved by the life of gospel, he is compelled to preach it in his living fields.

3. The gospel will advance to all peoples because of man's faith and obedience, and the gospel will also advance to all peoples because of man's obstinacy <Ro 10:16-21>

1) The obstinacy of Israel tells us that God's faithfulness and mercy is not reduced because of human obstinacy <10:16-19>

* First, we cannot attribute to God the responsibility of the obstinacy of majority of Israelites, and think that God did not give them chance to believe, because it is clearly stated here that the voice of the gospel messenger has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. We have to know that Paul was not exaggerating to mean that the gospel has already been universalised, but he meant a representative universalism, meaning that wherever there was a Jewish community, the gospel already reached there, but they rejected it. Thus, <v19> says, "Did Israel not understand?" That is a state of "heard but could not understand", just like a person understands the logic of the gospel, but his heart cannot accept. This is a description of a person opposing God inherently.

* But we have to ask, does God deduct His faithfulness and mercy because of this? No! God is still a faithful and merciful God, thus in the obstinacy of Israel, He continues to carry out the works of saving His people, sending the gospel to His elected peoples among the Gentiles. In this way, many Gentiles receive this glorious gospel because of Israel's obstinacy. After these groups of peoples are completely won over, this gospel will once again return to the nation of Israel, such that this ever-obstinate people will return to God, and surrender to the righteousness, which is Christ, which comes from God and apart from the law.

2) The way to make Israel return to God is to use the blessedness of the Gentiles to "make Israel envious; make Israel angry" <10:19>

① At the physical level, Israel will see the prosperity of the nations and peoples who believe in Christ. This is also what we already saw from history, which is the thriving economy and civilization once enjoyed by the Western countries during their faith revival. In the latter days, we may also witness the prosperity of Asian and Arabic countries which turn to Christ, all these will provoke and stir Israel.

② At the spiritual level, the Judaism which the Israelites are believing in right now is unable to reconcile them to God (life transformation brought about by new birth). Even though they are extremely zealous, their devout faith is unable to help them enjoy that personal and intimate relationship with God. Because of this, Israelites who are truly elected by God will be attracted to come before God, because the children of God will surely yearn for that true intimacy, instead of ritualistic godliness, this is like Nicodemus who came looking for Jesus in the night, he thirsted to know God and experience the life in God, instead of ritualistic rules and religion.

* Of course, there must eventually be certain provoking reasons for Israel to repent, that is, Israelites will encounter some threats unknown to man now, such that the whole nation will be greatly terrified, then their spiritual consciousness will be awakened, and they will recognize their own sorry state, resulting in them reflecting upon their faith. These will happen very soon together with the events of the ever-nearing end times.

3) The conclusion is: God's grace and mercy will ultimately be exalted <10:20-21>

* When God extends salvation to the Gentiles, this is not by their initiative, instead, it is God who proactively made them encounter Him, by appearing to them. This demonstrates God's grace. On the other hand, the Bible also talks about God's mercy, saying that God all the more actively stretches out both His hands to the Israelites. God does this all day long, hoping that they will turn back, but He did not get any response. Thus, it is illustrated here that God cannot be blamed for the disbelief of the Israelites, they fell because of their own rebellion. However, does God give up on this nation because of this? No! Because in the midst of this, God preserves a remnant for Himself. When majority of the people do not believe, God has a wonderful plan, and that plan is in the raising of remnants. God always preserves a remnant in an obstinate family, community, and nation. This remnant is an evidence of God's faithfulness and mercy. If we cannot see any hope in our evangelism today, we should not doubt God's faithfulness, but we should instead seek out the remnants preserved by God, because through the beautiful footsteps of gospel which they left behind, the glorious evangelistic ministries will once again unfold. Finally, the Lord wants us to acknowledge a truth, which is, the few will once again impact the majority!