

ROMANS Part 94

Chapter 10:13-15

Heralding, hearing, believing.



For everyone, whoever should be invoking the name of the Lord, shall be saved. 14 How, then, should they be invoking One in Whom they do not believe? Yet how should they be believing One of Whom they do not hear? Yet how should they be hearing apart from one heralding? 15 Yet how should they be heralding if ever they should not be commissioned? According as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those bringing an evangel of good!

We know that invoking the name of the Lord is a gift of God that acquaints people with an already-accomplished fact, namely, salvation. No one can simply decide to call upon Christ. It may look and feel to people as though they are doing just this (“It suddenly dawned upon me one day to call upon Christ!”), but the ultimate impelling is of God. “God grants to each the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3). It ought to go without saying that calling upon an invisible Being requires faith. God provides such faith to those whom He has chosen beforehand for an early apprehension of His ways and means. The salvation of this context is the assurance of a future life with God that settles upon one’s apprehension in the form of not worrying so much about this ridiculously difficult life.

Speaking of practical experience, Paul suddenly becomes very nuts-and-bolts here, embarking upon a short, step-by-step process of how one acquires the God-given faith, offering us valuable insight into how God works. Paul has just written, “Whoever should be invoking the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Yes, but how does one do that? Never one to confuse horses and carts, Paul puts belief ahead of invocation: “How, then, should they be invoking One in Whom they do not believe?” This corresponds with what I wrote two issues ago (how nice of Paul to agree with me), that invoking—or confessing—isn’t what saves a person. Words flowing from a person’s lips are a caboose at the end of a train beginning with the engine of God. What saves a person is a God-imparted belief. So it’s not that one is saved because one confesses. Rather, one confesses because one is saved. All humanity was saved at the cross 2,000 years ago. “One died for the sake of all, consequently all died” (2 Corinthians 5:14). What remains is for each to eventually believe (“each in his own class”—1 Corinthians 15:23) in his or her own time (“the testimony in its own eras”—1 Timothy 2:6).

Any sort of God-affirming syllables formed at the human larynx necessarily follow.

THE SUDDEN LACK OF VIBRATING PENS

There are many fun ways God could have used to impart belief. He could have given people Technicolor dreams. Skywriting worked well for the Wicked Witch of the West in Oz—although she used a common script font that quickly evaporated. Too bad for her. Think of all the fonts God would have at his disposal, and the many effects available to Him; *Impact Bold*, for instance, does not quickly dissipate, not even in high humidity at considerable altitude. For a more personal



touch, God could have gone the wall-writing route as He did with King Belshazzar in the days of Daniel. There's nothing that makes an impression quite like a giant hand showing up after dinner etching somber things upon your dining room wall; just ask Belshazzar.

But no. If only. It has been a long time since God has been this racy. As recently as a dozen or so years after our Lord's death and resurrection, God imparted His gospels directly by miraculous means to choice individuals. Thus, Peter became the recipient and premier transmitter of the Circumcision gospel, Paul of the gospel of the Uncircumcision (Galatians 2:7). After these two men received their respective messages, the miraculous-passing-on-of-truth-directly-from-God's-mouth-to-the-hearts-and-pens-of-men method went into mothballs. From those days forward, God required human beings to haul themselves down dusty and sometimes dispiriting roads to deliver the good news in person or—somewhat easier but not by much—via print. This is why so few people besides the original writers ever believed. It's easy to believe when you see a

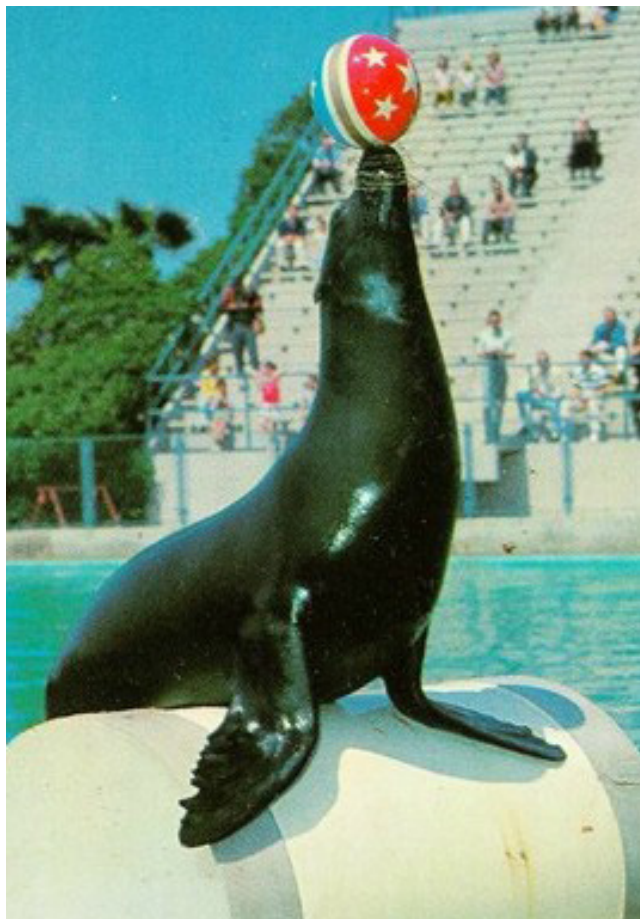
light hovering over your head and your pen is vibrating. God has decreed that believing today be a tedious process. Though still coming directly from Him, believing today can be messy. God wants it to be pedestrian and just a tad awkward. These days, those who would receive good news from heaven's throne must endure people approaching them with names like "Fred"—yes, Fred—who is probably wearing Crocs. Fred approaches, clears his throat and says, "Howdy, pal. Have you considered that maybe your religion is screwing you over?" It's an uphill battle. It doesn't help that Fred is bald and has never cleaned beneath his fingernails or flossed.

To make matters worse for ordinary people like Fred and those to whom he would speak, God made sure that the Bible was mistranslated in key places, causing potential believers to think that Fred might be manipulating it. The truth, of course, is that the Bible was already manipulated back when it was translated from Greek into Latin and then into English and other strange languages such as French. Fred is actually straightening it out. But his pen is not vibrating and his clothes are not glowing, so these are major strikes against him. Additionally, people lame from birth are refusing to rise from their pallets in Fred's wake. None of this bodes well for those seeking *soul-ish* fulfillment from Fred. Spiritual fulfillment, Fred's got. Just not the stuff that sends chills down your back.

"Yet how should they be believing One of Whom they do not hear? Yet how should they be hearing apart from one heralding? Yet how should they be heralding if ever they should not be commissioned?" (Romans 10:14-15).

Here is the drudgery I've been speaking of, on display. People have to hear the evangel before they can believe it; it has to be told to them. I know how inefficient this is, but it wasn't my idea. God graciously grants people to suffer for the sake of the evangel (Philippians 1:29) and this is a great way to do it; just try announcing it. *Yet how should they be hearing apart from one heralding?* So here comes Fred. But Fred is no ordinary guy; he's actually commissioned, if you can believe that. Few people *can* believe it. Fred doesn't look the part. But neither did Jesus Christ look the part of a conquering Savior. A person who is commissioned, in this context, is commissioned by God. Only the anointed eye can perceive the commissioning of God upon Fred; everyone else is staring at his Crocs. Jesus suffered similar prejudices in his cheap Nazareth footwear.





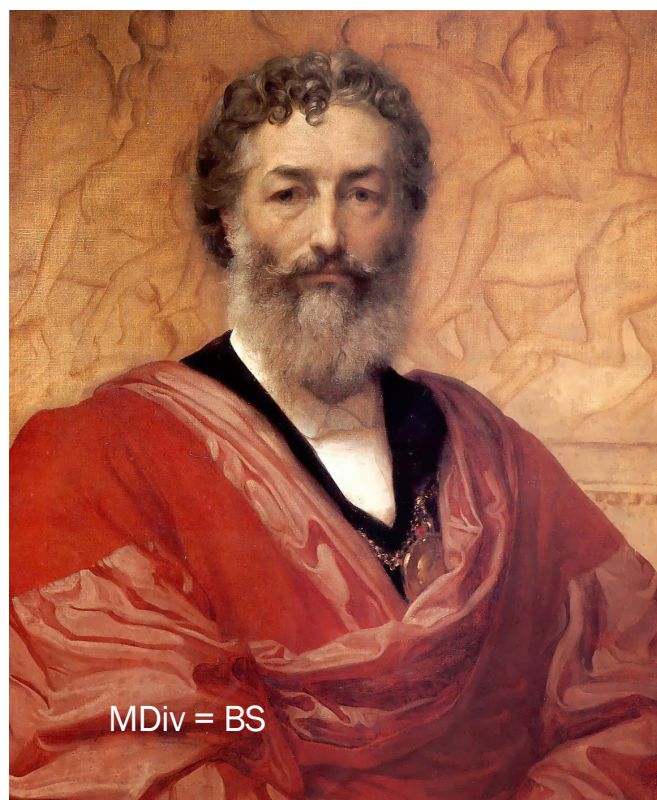
“They are not evangelists at all. They are heralds of bad news; *malangelists*. God does not heartily commission it.”

Human institutions have commissioned countless trained seals to herald the popular so-called truths of Christianity, but these are not truths at all. The commissioning institutions pronounce and publish this stuff (they “bark” it, actually) as “the truth,” but they have in fact exchanged the truth for a lie and venerate the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25). This is accomplished with teachings such as human free will (a doctrine in which the creature, man, is venerated), eternal torment and the Trinity. Armed with such false messages, these so-called evangelists can only be commissioned by other humans, and not by God. Thus, they are not evangelists at all. They are heralds of bad news; *malangelists*. God would not heartily commission a false message. He is ultimately responsible for false messages, yes (He has His reasons, which we have discussed elsewhere), but does not heartily commission them.

BORING TRUTH

When God does send forth truth these days, it’s life-changing and at the same time relatively boring. “God is the Savior of all humanity, especially of believers” (1 Timothy 4:10). “For we are reckoning a man to be justified by faith apart from works of law” (Romans 3:28). “Whoever are baptized into Christ Jesus, are baptized into His death” (Romans 6:3). “One died for the sake of all, consequently all died” (2 Corinthians 5:14). There is more consequential spiritual truth here than the physical truths propelling rockets into space. But who recognizes it? The words are just too ordinary; the messengers too dull; the circumstances surrounding the distribution too commonplace. Those heralding such profundities as these—those actually commissioned by God—study on their own, grasping the aforementioned quiet but profound revelations in the privacy of their upper rooms. Contrast this with organized religion, replete with graduation ceremonies, photographs, announcements in the newspaper, and the inevitable diploma. Such afflictions befall those accredited by humans. The upper-room-people bear no such burdens. They simply bear their own names (names like “Fred”) with no attached letters.

Theological degrees imposed by human institutions are in fact a sign of discrediting. When friends tell me



that their offspring are attending seminary, I send them a sympathy card. “Sorry about your luck,” says the front of my homemade card. Inside it says, “I hope they drop out.” Such pompous titles as “Reverend,” or “Master of Divinity” never emerged from God’s lips to alight upon any slave of Christ. God never once added a complicated acronym to the name of any select messenger. Any man of God previously saddled with such a handicap (See “Saul of Tarsus”) burned it upon grasping God’s true nature and the essence of the message.

The best example of common people distributing transformative truth is Peter and John in Acts 4:13—

Now on beholding the boldness of Peter and John, and grasping that they are unlettered and plain men, [the Chief Priest, elders and Saducees] marveled. Besides, they recognized them, that they were with Jesus.

Oh. They were with Jesus. Hmm. Perhaps that counts for something. Perhaps it counts for everything.

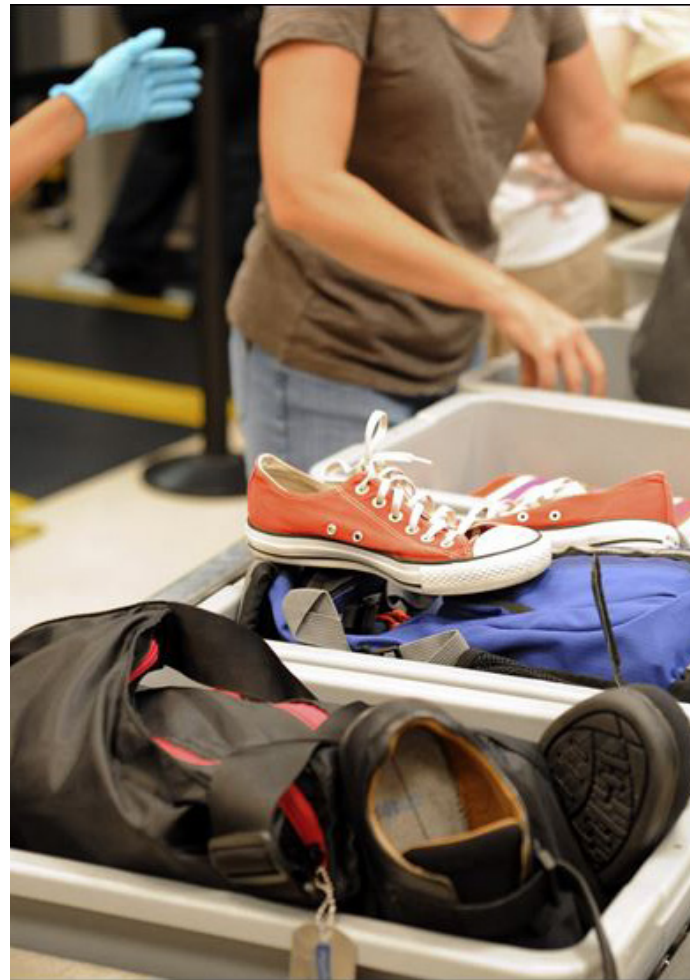
“According as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those bringing an evangel of good!” (Romans 10:15).

Someone once called my feet beautiful. Although I do have attractively pronounced arches, this person did not refer to any physical attribute beneath my ankles. He referred rather to the truth that came from me—from *me* of all people—and the fact that it changed his life.

Bearing and bringing truth is hard on the “feet.” Each word that comes from me (including those in this article) is the result of a vast struggle involving—

“I am an ambassador of Christ at an airport. Please check my boarding pass one more time. Sniff me with a dog.”

besides the requisite spiritual warfare—word order, paragraphing, and punctuation. Each word uttered on audio or video is a battle against not only the tide of apostasy, but my own lethargy and discouragement. This is not to mention technical hurdles, which are numerous and imposing. Sometimes I drive to meetings, other times I fly. When I fly, I remove my shoes for paranoid airport officials. I remove my shoes, my



belt, my jacket, and everything in my pockets. I then pass through a metal detector. Many times I have to repeat the metal detector procedure, as I habitually forget to remove my watch. After this, someone pats me down. I then collect my things from a plastic bin and file with other passengers toward the next humiliation. Watch out—I’m armed with the evangel of God. I’m an ambassador of Christ at an airport. Please check my boarding pass one more time. Sniff me with a dog.

When I drive, I must continually stop at service stations to refuel. Sometimes I clean my windshield. If it’s freezing, I chip ice off my wipers with a plastic tool. Sometimes I take short naps at rest stops. Many times I have spilled coffee in my car. When I scrub the coffee off the floor, I oftentimes find months-old candy under the seat. I will oftentimes eat the months-old candy, especially if it is chocolate-covered raisins. I have yet to spend a day and a night in a swamp, but I live in Florida now so my chances of that have improved.

The person who told me, “Your feet are beautiful,” celebrated such trials. He appreciated these hardships and the

reason why I would undertake them. He knew where my feet had been. His eyes were anointed. When others disparage my work, wondering what all the fuss is about and why I don't just get a "real" job so that I can give all this God stuff a break and become more like a normal person, I re-read this passage in Romans. I try to remind myself of who I really am. I remind myself that God doesn't *actually* need me, but that He has *decided* to need me and so now the message would not go out in the same way without me. God invented this, not me. Everything that I see screams against such realities. If Paul had not written such a blunt passage as the one under consideration, who would believe it? It strains even my credulity at times. Some people don't believe it in spite of Paul writing it. The methods of disseminating evangels will improve greatly in the next eon. That eon is not yet. In the meantime, plastic bins, unleaded fuels and the keyboard of a dented Apple computer keep me announcing God to a dark world. It is an acceptable era for this.

I would not be caught dead in Crocs. —MZ

Consequently, faith is out of tidings, yet the tidings through a declaration of Christ (Romans 10:17).



Just wanted to encourage you, Martin. You are making a difference, more than you know. I have spent a lot of time feeling alone in this calling to truth. For nearly 20 years, my dear Mom had opposed my beliefs. She went from one church to another: "Word," "Faith" and some new age stuff. It was hard, but I was grateful knowing that God is in charge. I came to have peace over this rift (we had to agree to disagree) believing God always works things out for the best, even when we are too short-sighted to see it. The last year or so, Mom had softened in her views. I decided to forward her your beautiful writings on Romans 8 (my absolute favourite verses) and it was amazing! God flipped the switch, so to speak, and suddenly everything that made no sense to her has become her passion. She is consuming ALL that she finds on your website, and now we have so much to share! She is even attending Bible study with fellow believers in the Branson, Mo. area. It is evident that the work you are so driven to do takes a toll on you emotionally and physically. But please know that this precious work, and your God-given gift for painting such vivid word-pictures DOES make a difference! Praying for God to strengthen you with His peace. Thanks for your constant efforts to further the message. Love, B.T.

You know, it's an amazing thing when you realize that all the pain, loneliness, uncertainties and disappointments in your life have turned out to be a journey that has been perfectly designed for you. You helped me come to this conclusion concerning my own life, that God is doing this *for* me and not *to* me. You are a blessing and a gift. I'm so glad you dropped to your knees thirty-seven years ago and begged God to show you the truth of the "Who" and the "Why" of Jesus Christ. A brother sent me two copies of your book, *The First Idiot in Heaven*. I'm grateful and giddy as a child as I read.

Prayers and much love to you. —G.P.

Martin, this is weird but true. I was watching Revelation Series #109 - "All Creation Groans." You invited dogs and cats to hear your message. I heard a noise behind me. It was my faithful pooch Riley jumping up onto a chair to look over my shoulder at the computer monitor to see the smart-ass who invited him to a Bible study. The weird thing— Riley NEVER sits in that chair. He always sits on the couch on the other side of the room. Also weird - I had my head phones on. Riley sensed you had something worthwhile to say. He acted like you were E.F. Hutton. —W.F.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6md6Gj57oHg>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQLfMZGp5Po>



CLICK!