

# The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,*

*holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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## Why Not Now?

It is exceedingly amazing to me that so many simple teachings in the Bible can be misunderstood. While Martin Luther had good intentions in starting the 16th century Reformation Movement, a religious revolt against Catholicism, more harm has been done religiously than good from that movement. After the Lutheran church was started in 1520, several other Protestant churches came about and began to dominate the religious world. However, it wasn't only Protestantism that came out of the Reformation Movement, Reformed Theology was hanging on to its coattail. Reformed Theology involves a monergistic belief. Monergism is defined as *"the doctrine that the Holy Spirit acts independently of the human will in the work of regeneration"* (Dictionary.com). Notice the monergistic belief of Martin Luther. He wrote, *"I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him..."* This is classic Monergism, and it is the foundation of the so-called Reformed Theology which came out of the Reformation Movement. John Hendryx, a preacher of Reformed Theology, wrote, *"In theology, [monergism is] the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is the only efficient agent in regeneration [the new birth] - that the human will possess no inclination to holiness until regenerated [born again], and therefore cannot cooperate in regeneration."* All this is saying that regeneration precedes belief, for the only way a person can believe is if he is miraculously regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

Is this the source of our initial faith—a miraculous outpouring of the Spirit? The consequence of this Reformed Theology is staggering, yet all Calvinists, and some who don't even claim to be Calvinistic, meaning the majority of the religious world, accepts this false doctrine. If this monergistic doctrine is true, we have a picture of God that is, not only less than flattering, it is downright ugly. Think about it. God commands man to have faith (Hebrews 11:6), but He knows that we can't have faith unless He miraculously gives it to us by some kind of outpouring of the Spirit. If He, through the Spirit, works on our hearts, then we will believe and He will save us. However, if He doesn't allow us to believe by refusing to operate on our hearts, He will turn around and condemn us to hell for not believing. Really? There is no way to align that doctrine with a loving God. Then we must add to this scenario the Calvinistic concept of predestination, that is, the teaching that God decided who He was going to allow to believe and who He wasn't before we were even born. It's all arbitrary. For those who are not chosen God created them for one purpose, that is, to condemn them to hell. He knew before He created them that they were going to go to hell. He knew when He was creating them that they were going to hell. He knew after He created them that they were going to hell. And still, we are all, even those of us who might be destined to hell, no matter what we do or how we live, suppose to believe that God loves us. Who can believe it. Yet this is the Calvinistic doctrine of

monergism.

Listen to James White, an author, debater, and elder in the Phoenix Reformed Baptist Church: *“We believe that God, in His sovereign grace and mercy, regenerates sinful men by the power of the Holy Spirit, not by any action of their own, bringing them to new life. God grants to them the gifts of faith and repentance, which they then exercise by believing in Christ and turning from their sins in love for God”* (Alpha & Omega Ministries, Statement of Faith). According to Mr. White, believing in Christ is only possible after one is regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, our regeneration has nothing to do with a decision we make to accept or reject Christ or believe in God; it all has to do with whether or not God decides to open our eyes by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Well, let's get to the simple truth. Faith isn't given to us miraculously by some outpouring of the Holy Spirit initiated by God. Faith is produced by the Word of God. Paul said, *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ”* (Romans 10:17). Regarding the miracles of Christ that John recorded, he tells us, *“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”* (John 20:30-31). The Bible is clear. Faith is produced by God's Word, and we have direct statements in the Bible to teach us this, as well as, specific examples of people hearing the Word and believing, apart from the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37; 4:1-4; 8:12-13). What about the people of Old Testament times? Did they need a miraculous operation of the Spirit to be saved? If so, why did God send Jonah to Nineveh to preach the Word in order to get them to repent? The truth is, when Jonah finally got around to going to Nineveh, he preached to them and they repented (Jonah 3:6-10). That's the power of God's Word, and it has always had the power to convert people and change lives. How is faith produced? The Bible says it is produced by the gospel of Christ. I marvel that even this simple truth can be messed up by man

*Don*

## **My Foot Hurts**

**Mike Davis**

**I**t is widely accepted that “when your feet hurt, you hurt all over.” Since my feet were severely burned in concrete in 1973, I've had an abundance of “foot problems.” Recently, a recurring ailment required painful therapy to get rid of the painful element. (No one ever said life would be easy!) The treatments worked, and for now, my feet are pain free. Now that we've discussed the matter physically, let's talk spiritually: let's talk “foot comfort!”

Spiritually, our feet are to be shod with the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15). We that preach the gospel of peace are said to have “beautiful feet” (Rom. 10:15), and with our feet properly shod, Satan is bruised (Rom. 16:20). Obviously, some folks' feet might hurt due the gospel not “fitting their feet” just right. It should not seem strange to the Bible student that one's foot must conform to the gospel; not the gospel to one's foot! Likewise, some folks have “sore feet” because the gospel is “stepping on their toes.” Might it be their lives are akin to the directions of Satan who is to be bruised beneath the feet of the righteous? (ibid) And while some may consider the feet of many as being “ugly”, might it

be they are not so attracted to the beauty of the gospel of peace these souls declare?

The fact is, the gospel of Christ is unchanging (John 12:44- 50; Galatians 1:6 – 10). Therefore, when folks complain about their spiritual feet hurting, it should be obvious they are not permitting their own conformity to the gospel! For those who WILLINGLY conform to the gospel, there is great comfort in walking in truth (3 John 4). Likewise, there is great strength in taking the gospel to others (1 Thess. 2:2 – 4) and of course there is nothing more beautiful to the soul than the saving gospel!

As a preacher, I've learned to accept "You stepped on my toes" as a compliment – at least I trust they are sincere in telling me the lesson got their attention! As well, I remind them my own toes are closer to my mouth than theirs, and so "I step on my own toes first" with every sermon. One my earliest mentors told me, "If the sermon you preach doesn't help you first, don't expect it to help anyone in your audience." So, I've learned to examine those lessons that help me, and through that preaching, prayerfully help those who hear me (comp. 1 Tim. 4:16)

Yes, I frequently muse on how bad my feet hurt, especially after listening to and appreciating a challenging study of God's Word! Every lesson should gain our attention, find a suitable area in which to strengthen us in service to God, and motivate us to a stronger, more diligent walk with Him. Certainly, we should muse on the strength of the GOSPEL, not our feet! Yes, we must use them to stand and to walk: but without the gospel covering them as we journey, I'm quite sure we'll suffer an abundance of "foot problems" we could easily prevent if we would but allow our feet to become beautiful, bold and adorned with the powerful gospel of Jesus Christ!