

Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

We're continuing this morning, with our look at the Armor of God. We're in Ephesians chapter 6 verses 10-18 and today we're looking at verse 15. We've looked at the belt of Truth. This is a life that measures up to God's standard of Truth. It is the character of integrity. This is what holds the rest of the armor in place and keeps us from tripping over ourselves. Last week we looked at the breastplate of righteousness. This is the character of godliness. It describes our position before God, He looks at us and sees righteousness because of our faith in Jesus. It also has to do with our actions; we are to choose to do what is right. When we understand our position before God and we are living lives that are above reproach, Paul says that our hearts are protected from attack. Satan will not be able to find a crack to exploit or a flaw to expose. So, we've got the belt on and the breastplate secured and now Paul says we need the right footwear.

Ephesians 6

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

The shoes of a Roman soldier were a very important part of the armor. The soldiers often had to march upwards of 30 miles in a single day and if they didn't have good shoes, they would be unable to make the journey and unable to enter into the battle. They were boot/sandals. Josephus said that they were "thickly studded with sharp nails" like cleats. These war boots enabled infantryman to dig in and make a stand in hand to hand combat.

For the Christian, as we seek to hold our ground and to stand firm in the fight, we need to be wearing the right shoes. Note that in order "to stand against the wiles of the devil" we are to "shod" our feet "with the preparation of the gospel of peace." "Preparation" means readiness. A good pair of boots makes a soldier ready to march, attack and fight. The NIV says we are to have our "feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."

So, there are two key elements here. The first is this Gospel of peace, and the second is the readiness that comes from this gospel that Paul is referring to.

I. Understanding the Shoes of the Gospel of Peace.

When Paul uses the phrase gospel of peace, we need to turn to God's truth to see what he's referring to. The Gospel is full of references to peace. It is central to understanding Salvation, to making it through this life, and to being the church that we are called to be.

The Greek word that is translated peace, here, is *EirAnA*. It means that which has been bound together. It's the idea of two things that once were separate and against each other now being joined and being held together in an unbreakable bond. There are three related aspects of the gospel of peace. The first is:

A. Peace with God

By the work of Jesus Christ, we are bound with God. Two parts that were separate and against each other, now joined in an unbreakable bond. I never get tired of this reality! This is the Good News! We were God's enemies and at war with God because of our sin and Jesus Christ came to bring peace between God and people.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

When we understand this reality, we can combat the attacks of Satan when he tries to tell us that we're not good enough for God. When he tries to convince us that God cannot be known or would never draw near to someone like us because of our sins and shortcomings. We can stand with confidence and say God and I are at peace, it's all good! That is a part of the gospel of peace and there is power in that Truth!

Do you have peace with God?

In order to have peace with God you must first recognize that you are on the wrong side. Because you are a sinner, you are not the friend of God, you are the enemy of God. Notice in Romans 5: 6-10 how Paul describes us before we are saved: ungodly (v. 6), sinners (v. 8), enemies (v. 10). But the gospel, the good news, is that God does not leave us helpless as enemies. Because of His great love He did something about it. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, **"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."** (Rom. 5:8-10).

God sent a Savior to rescue you from sin and judgment. You must believe in this Savior and submit to Him because He is the Lord.

So the crucial question is, "Have you repented of your sins and believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? Have you trusted in His death as the payment for your sins? Have you submitted to Him as the Lord of your life?" If not, your god is the god of this world, Satan. You can't put on the shoes of the gospel of peace until you've appropriated the gospel personally.

I will never forget the first moment I sensed peace with God!

Illustration of Peace - Jim Walton was translating the NT for the Muinane people of La Sabana in the jungles of Colombia. But he was having trouble with the word peace. During this time, Fernando, the village chief, was promised a 20-minute plane ride to a location that would have taken him 3 days to travel by walking. The plane was delayed in arriving at La Sabana, so Fernando departed on foot. When the plane finally came, a runner took off to bring Fernando back. But by the time he had returned, the plane had left. Fernando was livid because of the mix-up. He went to Jim and launched into an angry tirade. Fortunately, Walton had taped the chief's diatribe. When he later translated it, he discovered that the chief kept repeating the phrase, "I don't have one heart." Jim asked other villagers what having "one heart" meant, and he found that it was like saying,

"There is nothing between you and the other person." That, Walton realized, was just what he needed to translate the word peace. To have peace with God means that there is nothing--no sin, no guilt, no condemnation--that separates us. And that peace with God is possible only through Christ (Ro 5:1-note). Do you have "one heart" with God today?

Not only do we have the gift of peace with God, but we have been given the:

B. Peace of God

When life presses in, when money is short and the bills are long, when relationships are crumbling and we don't know if we can make it another day, we have the peace of God. This is not a promise of ease and comfort but it is a deep seated peace that comes from understanding that God is in control and that though we may be walking through the valley of the shadow of death, we need not fear any evil, because God is with us and it's only a matter of time until he leads us back to that green pasture and lays us down beside still waters because we serve a God who loves us and has plans in our lives to prosper us. Believe that promise and you will be amazed at the peace it brings.

Philippians 4:6-7, **"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."**

This is a peace unlike any that man can give. Man can't understand it because man can't give it or come up with it on his own. The peace that man can offer is temporary and unstable and always based on what we can do or provide. This is different. This is based on what God can do and provide. We have the Peace of God. Like salvation, the peace of God is a gift of God. Jesus said, **"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."** (John 14:27).

How do we get it? Pray! God's peace is a gift that comes when we give all our problems and anxieties to God and trust that He will accomplish His will in every situation. Too many times we give it to God and then take it back again so that we can worry and try and figure it out on our own. You want peace? Believe God. You want peace? Trust God. Rest in Him and you will have this peace.

Again, this is an essential part of our defense. Satan will try to convince you that God doesn't care or that God can't accomplish something that we are asking Him for. Stand with the peace of God, knowing that God cares and that God listens and answers and is able to work out any circumstance in our lives for our good.

Satan knows that a distracted soldier is an ineffective soldier.

Satan knows that an anxious soldier is a reluctant soldier.

Satan knows that a troubled soldier is a defeated soldier.

Satan knows that a frazzled soldier is a tired soldier.

Therefore, Satan will do everything he can to keep us from appropriating this piece of armor. He will disrupt our peace with God through his lies. He will destroy our peace with others through his lies. He will disturb peace in our world through his subversive activity.

He will defeat our inner peace by his lies.

Barker was a missionary from Great Britain who spent over 50 years in Portugal preaching the gospel, often under adverse conditions. During WW II situation became so critical that he took the advice to send his wife & children to England for safety. His sister & her 3 children were also evacuated on the same ship. Barker remained behind to conclude some missionary services. The Sunday after Barker's loved ones had left, he stood before the congregation and said, "I've just received word that all my family have arrived safely home." He then proceeded with the service as usual. Later, the full meaning of his words became known to his people. He was handed a wire before the meeting informing him that a submarine had torpedoed the ship and everyone on board drowned. Barker knew that all on board were believers and the knowledge that his family was enjoying the bliss of Heaven enabled him to live above the circumstances in spite of his overwhelming grief.

Horatio Spafford experienced a similar situation when his four daughters were killed in a shipwreck. Through that tragedy, he wrote the words of that great hymn that says,

**When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.**

We have Peace with God, the Peace of God, and are also called to have

C. Peace with Others

The first one has to do with our relationship with God, the second one has to do with a gift of God to us, and this aspect of the Gospel of Peace is our response.

- HEB 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men
- 1 Thes 5:13 Live in peace with each other.
- Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.
- Mark 9:50 and be at peace with each other."
- COL 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.
- Eph 4:3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
- 1 Cor 7:15 God has called us to live in peace.
- RO 14:19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Over and over again we see that the charge on the life of a Christian is to live in peace. The importance of this when we talk about spiritual warfare are fairly obvious. This is the crack that Satan gets into in a lot of churches. When there is no peace among the members of a church, there can be no unity. When there is no unity in the church the focus always remains inside, on what is happening

among the people already in the church and not on the outside on those who need to hear the gospel. And if the church tries to shift the focus to the outside, people come in and when they don't see peace, they want nothing to do with our God. I think that Satan keeps so many pastors busy putting out little fires between the people of the church that they can't concentrate of God's command to make disciples. We've got to see the bigger picture of what the church is called to be and be at peace with each other so that there is unity in the church and so we can be used by God together to change the world! As long as there is one unsaved soul left outside these walls, we all have a common mission and calling by God to reach the lost. This can't happen when we don't have peace.

When someone says something that offends you, choose peace. When you get overlooked for something that you did in the church, choose peace. If you aren't happy with every little aspect of the service or don't like the preaching, choose peace! This will make a world of difference in this place and in your life and you will be a peacemaker.

Jesus said, "**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.**" (Matt 5:9).

So, the gospel of peace is threefold. We have peace with God, we have the peace of God, and we have peace with one another. Each aspect strengthens and empowers us to stand when we understand the implications of them in our lives and how we can use this Truth to fend off the attacks of our enemy. There's another aspect to these shoes though. Paul says that there is a readiness that comes from this gospel of Peace.

II. Applying the Peace of God in Spiritual Warfare.

Like imputed righteousness, we receive peace with God the moment we are born again. It is this peace with God that we stand. And it is in the peace of God we fight against the devil and all his forces of wickedness.

A. To Stand our Ground

The soldier's shoes dug in and did not allow them to be pushed back. We need to be ready, as Christians, Paul says to stand our ground. We can't allow ourselves to be tossed back and forth and blown here and there. What does this mean practically today? We've got to learn to defend our faith. We've got to learn to stand up for what we believe. Satan wants to convince us that we don't know enough so we should keep our mouths shut!

The time is coming in America when the Christian will no longer be able to be passive because we are already coming under fire and its only going to get hotter. We've got to strap on our shoes and be ready to stand our ground.

B. To Take New Ground

The spikes in the soldiers shoes helped them to push forward and take enemy ground. Paul continues in chapter 4 and says: **15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.** We are to grow up, we are to be moving forward. The Christian walk can be measured by growth. We are not made to be the same year after year. If you look back at your walk with God last year and you don't know if you've grown or

not, there is something wrong. We have to learn to take new ground in our spiritual battles.

C. To Carry the Good News

When the battle was won, a soldier would run as quickly as possible to inform those who needed to know of the good news. The right shoes were vital to this journey. In our lives, one of the functions of these battle shoes is the preparation and readiness to go anywhere that God leads to share this Gospel of Peace with others.

We are surrounded by a world that needs the answer that we have, that need the hope that we have, and that needs the peace that we have and yet for so many of us, while the world outside is turning further from God, these shoes sit by the door while we remain unmoved inside. It is estimated that over 95% of Christians have never led anyone else to Christ. When is the last time you shared your faith with someone else?

Romans says 10:13 says that **"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**

But it goes on to say, very logically:

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

Those beautiful feet are wearing these shoes! Shoes that are ready to go and share.

For some of us it's time to take off our comfy slippers and have our feet fitted with peace. We have peace with God and are promised the peace of God if we'll let things go and trust Him. Will you accept that peace this morning and lay down whatever burden it is that you're carrying? You can have this peace that passes all human understanding. And we can have peace with others, if we make some hard, unnatural choices. We are made to have peace and to experience unity in the Body that is this church. When we have this peace, we need to be ready to stand, ready to grow, and ready to share with all who will listen, that there is but one source of peace in this world and it is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. This news is much too good to keep to ourselves!