

The Armour of God

Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Scripture Reading

Today's talk is the third in our series entitled "The armour of God." So, let's start by reading about the armour of God in Ephesians 6 verses 10-18 from the NKJV.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

Context in Ephesians

This Scripture is the final instruction given by Paul in the practical section of his letter to the Ephesians before his sign-off in vv. 21-23. Ephesians divides into two parts: first a doctrinal section, chs. 1-3; and second a practical section, chs. 4-6. Its structure is easily remembered using the title 'Sit, Walk, Stand' of Watchman Nee's exposition: "Sit" captures the main point of Paul's teaching about believers' blessings and their position of being "in Christ." "Walk" covers the practical part, in which Paul exhorts believers to walk, or live, in ways which are in keeping with their heavenly calling. "Stand" is the command which summarises the verses we have read from ch. 6. Although we "sit", or rest, "in Christ", we cannot be complacent. Did you notice in verse 12 that we're in a battle, a spiritual warfare:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (NIV).

As such, it's a battle for our souls, hearts, and minds. It's real, it's every day; and we need to be equipped and ready.

Gospel shoes

Now, it's a fact that any soldier needs all the pieces of equipment to go into battle. Verse 11 specifically commands us: "Put on the whole armour of God!" In this series, we're considering each individual piece one by one, but we need to use them all, all of the time. They're one whole and we can't fight without them. Also, the armour belongs to God, He provides it. Despite knowing these truths, we can often become complacent and easily lulled into a false sense of security by our relative comfort and seeming peace here in the UK. But these verses are clear. Christians are constantly engaged in a spiritual battle, so the correct 'spiritual footwear' is essential, what we might term 'Gospel shoes.' Or as the NIV renders verse 15:

Your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

It's generally accepted that Paul used Roman soldiers' armour to illustrate the meaning of 'The Armour of God.' The preparation of the Gospel of peace is represented by the protective shoes (or sandals) worn by Roman soldiers to fight effectively or march effectively. The Jewish historian Josephus described them as 'shoes thickly studded with sharp nails...so as to ensure a good grip.' This is very apt. By the strength of the Lord's might in our spiritual warfare, we're to stand firm against the wily strategies of the devil. Our sure footing is in the 'Gospel of Peace.' The word "preparation" means "a prepared foundation." The same Greek word is used in this way in the Septuagint version of Ps. 89:14 for God's throne:

Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of thy throne (RV).

The 'Gospel of Peace' provides the secure foundation, or footing, for everything we do. However protected the rest of your body is, if your feet are vulnerable, you're an easy prey for the enemy. But Roman soldiers' boots were also designed for marching, reminding us of the necessity to walk, that is, live as Christians in ways which are worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1) through the 'Gospel of Peace'; and therefore be ready (the real idea of "preparation") to give testimony to the truth of the 'Gospel of Peace.' The truth is the only place to stand in the Christian life to be in constant readiness with the 'Gospel of Peace.'

The purpose of wearing our 'Gospel shoes' as part the whole armour is "so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (6:11, NIV). These schemes are fundamentally the devil's strategies and tactics. As 'the father of lies' and 'the accuser of the brethren', He speaks lies into our hearts and minds. To combat his lies and false accusations we need truth, Gospel truth, and the peace and victory it brings. We wear our 'Gospel of Peace' shoes to stand against the enemy's lies.

The Gospel of Peace in the Old Testament

But I'm sure that Paul, being so conversant with the Old Testament Scriptures, was referring to Isaiah 52 verse 7 when he used the term "the gospel of peace":

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

And repeated in Nahum 1 verse 15:

Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace! O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; he is utterly cut off.

Isaiah wrote in times when the northern power of Assyria (with the kingdom of Babylon a mere distant rumble on the horizon) began reasserting itself in the world. Chapters 1-39 deal with the immediate threat of Assyrian invasion and the promise of deliverance for Zion. In 721 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel was deported by Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria (2 Kings 17:1-23 & 18:9-12). A few years later, Sennacherib, the next-but-one king of Assyria, took all the fortified cities of Judah, as prophesied in Isaiah 8:5-8 & chapters 28-31. At this point in their history King Hezekiah was told by Isaiah to rely solely upon God for deliverance (chs. 36-37), which miraculously came in one night (37:36-37). After describing this deliverance, and to allay Judah's fears both of Assyrian and of future world superpowers, Isaiah reminded the people of Judah in chapter 40 of comfort from God, who is Someone far greater than even the most powerful nations. Chapters 40 onwards are full of promises to the Remnant of their great Deliverer, Messiah, who will bring in the final Kingdom. Chapter 52 verse 7 exults in those who preach this Gospel of the Kingdom amidst the nation's apostasy and turmoil during the Tribulation. It's a Gospel of deliverance for saved Israel, which leads to Millennial peace and blessedness.

But in Romans 10:15, Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7 to substantiate the Gospel of the grace of God, when he explains the process of how people are saved during the present dispensation:

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." 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? 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!" (Romans 10:9-15).

Let's now consider 'The Gospel of Peace' under three headings:

1. Peace forever with God, which is offered in the Gospel of Christ.
2. Peace guaranteed for and in all circumstances and difficulties of life.
3. The far-reaching effects of 'The Gospel of Peace'.

1. Peace forever with God

One of the main spiritual battles we constantly face is that the devil's lies sow doubt and insecurity into our hearts and minds. Those gnawing worries to big questions like: 'Is the Gospel really true?'; 'Does God really love, and always accept, me?' 'Is my soul really safe, forever and no matter what?'; 'Why doesn't it always feel true?' To stand firm in Christ we need our feet shod with the preparation of the 'Gospel of Peace.' To resist in the battle for our souls, to have peace and assurance in our hearts and minds, and to 'stand firm', we need to understand the Gospel. To be absolutely sure of the Gospel's verity and of our judicial standing before God, we must realise that the Gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). Our trust in God's word brings us spiritual peace.

Naturally, instinctively, maybe even unconsciously, every one of us were enemies of, and at war with, God. But Christ,

made peace through the blood of His cross. And [we], who once were alienated and enemies in [our minds] by wicked works...He has

reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present [us] holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed [we] continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel (Colossians 1:20-23).

Now we're on God's side and He on ours! Our peace is 100% secure and it's forever. As Paul explains in Ephesians 2:12-14:

You were [separated] from Christ...without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He is Himself our peace.

This is the 'Gospel of Peace', the only sure foundation for our feet, for our lives, for our hearts and minds. This is our stance and defence against doubts and lies. This everlasting peace comes through believing:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

Whatever spiritual attacks we face, and we probably face many more than we're even aware of, we can stand firm, secure in the knowledge that we have peace with God through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our lives, our souls, are secure for eternity. The Lord is for us and His Spirit lives in us, both as a seal of belonging to Him, but also to give us the strength to withstand these evil attacks and to stand safe and secure in Him. And for any listener today who doesn't know peace with God, you can obtain it by repenting of your sins and placing your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Peace guaranteed for and in all circumstances and difficulties of life

Everyone who chooses to believe in, and to follow, Jesus Christ as Lord has perfect and everlasting peace with God, which reassures our souls for eternity. But thankfully this 'Gospel of Peace' also means that Christ, through His death and resurrection, has won peace for you and me so that we can be at peace in our daily lives with their everyday spiritual battles. Whenever we're anxious, whenever the cares of life are bogging us down or we feel ourselves slipping and our footing feels unsure, we have this guarantee from the Lord Jesus Himself:

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).

It's important to make clear that peace isn't the absence of battles, nor that all is calm and comfortable, a stroll in the park. No, we're at war! Rather this peace is the assurance that in the inevitable and ongoing spiritual battles we all face so much of the time, we do have the assurance of victory. The Lord Himself said:

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

He's on our side, by our side, and living in us, giving us peace every day, despite how unsettled we may feel, no matter how hard the going may be. In the face of our untrustworthy feelings, the many pressures of the world, and the devil's lies, we need these guarantees from Him.

When we say 'peace', it's not temporary, fickle peace dependent on our feelings or circumstances. Rather, it's His peace despite troubles, peace amidst troubles, peace in, and during, really tough

struggles and circumstances; a supernatural deep peace when spiritual battles arise, when we're wearied, disappointed, or struggling, when it doesn't feel right; and the devil whispers doubts, accusations, and fears into our hearts and minds.

Many years ago, there was an elderly couple in my local church, who had three grown up sons. Two of them had emigrated to western Canada. Their mother used to regularly write to them and always finished her letters exhorting them to maintain a good Christian testimony in this way: "Remember, R = P; and R = (Q + A)" based on Isaiah 32:17:

The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

Sound motherly advice! And here is another quote from Isaiah:

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD God is [the rock of ages, Darby] (Isaiah 26:3-4, ESV).

The peace the Lord Himself promises is described in Philippians 4:7 as "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding." And we access this resource through prayer:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God (v. 6).

Verse 7 guarantees that God's own peace "will guard [our] hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." When believers put all their anxieties, problems, disappointments, and whatever, into the hand of God, His very own peace acts as a military garrison to protect us from the enemy of our souls and all his forces of evil. The challenge for each one of us is, as the famous hymn says, to 'take it to the Lord in prayer', not forgetting to be thankful!

3. The far-reaching effects of 'The Gospel of Peace'

During the first ever preaching to an exclusively Gentile audience in Cornelius' house, the apostle Peter said that God had sent His word to Israel, "preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36). By adding, "He is Lord of all", Peter realised that God had consigned all mankind to disobedience, so that he might have mercy on everybody (see Romans 11:32). Paul explained,

For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in [Jesus] will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:11-13).

The gospel of peace was radical showing that the enmity between the Jews and the other nations is now over. Paul wrote about these 'peace consequences' in Ephesians 2:1-8. He taught how that by God's great mercy and abundant grace, we sinners who deserved only His wrath, have been saved from it. God has made believers alive together with Christ, raised them up together, and made them sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (see vv. 5-6). Not just individually associated with Christ, but together with all other believers in Him! 'The Gospel of Peace' brings together people who were not only enemies of God but were also enemies of each other. Paul exclaimed:

But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far off [from God] have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our

peace, who has made both [Jew and Greek] one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body [the Church] through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you [Gentiles] who were afar off and to [the Jews] who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father (vv. 13-18).

Sadly, the outward testimony of the Church today is one of many denominations and divisions. But it remains a fact, there's only one Church of the living God; and its unity will be displayed in the ages to come (v. 7). But we're exhorted to exhibit this unity in our local churches:

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful (Colossians 3:15).

The second far reaching effect of 'The Gospel of Peace' is that it promises worldwide peace in the coming Kingdom of Christ. "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:7); along with Luke 2:13-14, the angelic multitude praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" form part of a traditional Scripture reading at Christmas. But we know that the Prince of Peace was rejected, and so we live in a world that's desperate for peace. The 'Gospel of Peace' message is that there's a glorious future for planet Earth and mankind when, the "kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15).

Practical Exhortations

Last year, my local church studied 'The armour of God.' The preacher who spoke on "having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace", said, "There couldn't be a better subject for me because I love shoes! So, you can imagine my delight when I realised that having the right shoes is actually biblical!" He went on to explain that he has a pair of shoes for every different activity in life. Afterwards I noticed the soft, canvas shoes he was wearing. It appealed to me that these were like 'The Gospel of Peace' shoes, which make us ready and equipped to share the truth of 'The Gospel of Peace' with those who are seeking for peace and naturally tend to look for it in all the wrong people and places.

Our mission is to share that good news and the peace it brings with all those we meet in life. The key is preparation, "the preparation of the gospel of peace." This word "preparation" is related to the word translated "prepared" in 2 Timothy 2:21:

He will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

Are we prepared? Have we put on our Gospel shoes?

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk entitled "Feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace", Talk No. T1459 in 'The Armour of God' series.

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