

The Armour –

Ephesians 6:14-15 ESV

(14) Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

(15) And, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

Introduction:

We come again to our discussion on the armor of God.

We have concluded that Paul was not loosely using an allegory.

We was not just rambling on when he, under diving inspiration, talked about the qualities of character that would protect a Christian against the worst attacks of the enemy.

Friend, do not be deluded by the lack or the poor teaching on satan and his minions.

The devil is real, he wants to kill, seek and destroy all that God loves and treasures.

And yet the devil is defeated.

We need not live in fear of the devil, but if the devil can destroy you life, ruin your testimony, ensnare your mind and rob your peace he will.

God delights in the prosperity of his people.
Satan delights in the destruction of Gods people.

Paul is coaching us on how to live victoriously in the face of such an adversary.

How we can stand, that is not being bowed and not be moved by demonic forces?

So far we have looked at the truth that wraps up, girds and encompasses our life.

Then we looked at the right-doing that covers our life and gives us boldness.

And now we come to the shoes that cover our feet.

There are three terms here that I would like us to look at to help try and understand what Paul is saying,

- We need to know what he means when he says “the shoes of our feet.”
- We also need to know what he means by “put on the readiness
- But the focus of this whole exhortation is the gospel of peace

It is for this gospel of peace that we should have our feet shod with and be made ready by.

But before we do that at length, let’s talk about a common misconception.

Misconception:

Let me start first of all with dealing with a common misconception.

Most of the teaching I have heard of on this portion of scripture always evolved around with the exhortation that we should be ready to go at any time to the nations of the world.

That we should have on our gospel shoes and be prepared to go gospel preaching.

Often a scripture used to support this is-

Romans 10:15 ESV

(15) And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

The emphasis is that part of our armour is that we should always be prepared to share the gospel with everyone at all times etc, etc.

Now we know that that sentiment is a scriptural imperative.

We are told to be ready to give account of ourselves at all time to all people in throughout scripture.

I agree that that should always be our attitude.

But the challenge I have here is that that is not the context of what Paul is writing about.

The whole object of this teaching is that we as Warriors for Christ should be able to stand against the attacks of the devil and all his powers.

This whole discussion is about us putting on our defensive armor against satan and evangelism can never be considered in a defensive light.

It is not something that we do as a reaction; it is something that we do as a passion.

It is something we do to advance the kingdom of God, not something we do as a response to the attack of the enemy.

Now the people who often use this verse in this way are very enthusiastic travelling ministers or evangelist or people with a missionary drive.

But the problem is that it is not a clear interpretation and does nothing for us to help us understand the overall essence of what Paul is saying.

It is jarring to me.

If you use this interpretation, then when you read this passage, it is like Paul is saying one thing, stops, randomly goes in another directions, then comes back again.

How I see the whole trust of this portion of scripture is that this gospel of peace gives us a readiness.

The gospel of peace is shoes for our feet.

And these shoes and this readiness enable us to stand against the attacks that come against us.

So let's look at it that way this morning.

The role of the feet in battle:

Paul talks in Corinthians about the need to ensure a sense of equality in the body, that we are aware that we need to be in harmony and balance, all playing an equal role and taking an equal responsibility in order to get the job done.

The feet are not a clamorous part of the body say like our eye, or our head, our hands or our heart.

People don't often think about the care of them until they give them trouble.

Your feet are the stable platform upon which everything else rests.

Balance and stability are absolutely essential to a fighter.

In fact the key to a really good punch is in the feet.
If your feet are not set and steady, you can't attack your opponent.

If you need to move away from an attack and reposition yourself, your feet have to move before the rest of your body can go anywhere.

You need to "keep your feet under you" is what my boxing coach always used to tell me.

And if your feet are under you, you don't notice them.

It is when you have been "knock off you feet" you end up sitting there looking at them.

There is a system within your body, the vestibular system that gives you balance and spatial orientation.

When it is injured we feel off balanced, fatigued, dizzy, you are constantly tripping over your feet.

Sometimes a boxing coach will spin you around with your eyes shut and then have you open them and start to spar so you can get a feel for what it is like to try and fight when you have taken a big hit and you have lost your orientation because your vestibular systems has been jarred.

In order to win a boxing match, or in the example that Paul uses, a wrestling match, you have to stay on your feet.

And in order to stay on your feet, you have to have a really good sense of balance.

Balance is the key to life.

You have to have a sense of balance between what is right and what is wrong.

Without a sense of balance you cannot stay on your feet in the midst of battle.

Without a sense of being stable, without having a sure foundation.

So it is with this gospel of peace.

This gospel of peace is the sure foundation upon which we stand.

Paul says that this gospel of peace are like shoes to us and makes us ready for battle.

Now Paul was sitting in prison looking at a Roman soldier and a very specific pair of shoes that they wore into battle.

So let's just talk about those shoes for a while...ladies...its getting exciting...

These shoes we are to wear:

First of all, these are sturdy shoes.

These were the shoes of a warrior.

They were a thick leather thong that sat underneath the foot and where held in place with thick leather bands to the leg .

They were designed to be durable.

Underneath the sole were hobnails or brass studs embedded in the bottom of the shoe.

They were designed not to slip.
They were design to grip the dirt.

They were design to move forward and not allow you to slip back..

Now these sandals were a major contributing factor to roman success militarily.

Often warriors of opposing forces would have simple soft leather foot wear or bare feet.

And enemy would put down concealed traps in the ground.

They would take pieces of wood and chisel them to a sharp point and bury them in the ground with just the point barely showing.

And as a force advanced the front lines would step on these spikes and impale their feet, the back lines would keep on advancing and the front lines would be trampled or they would hold up the advance.

The Romans would see them bogged down and would attack with their thicker safer shoes.

Now the injuries may not initially be life threatening, but if not treated they could cause infection through out the whole body.

A soldier with a foot wound could not walk back by himself; he would have to be carried back by at least two other soldiers.

So one injured foot would mean three soldiers out of the battle.

So this gospel of peace that Paul is talking about here is essential.

It protects the feet.

It gives stability to the feet.

It gives a foundation upon which the warrior can stand.

It keeps you moving forward in times of stress and warfare

Second, these shoes gave mobility:

In harsh and desolate conditions footwear was essential for troop movement and mobility.

Alexander conquered the ancient world because of the footwear his troops had and the Romans copied the example.

Feet being in a continual damp and wet environment literally cause them to rot. Feet would swell, start to take on an odor of decay and ultimately would result in gangrene and the need for amputation.

It was called trench foot in World War 1.

Napoleon noticed this amongst his men in 1812.

Soldiers in both world wars and Vietnam suffered it.

When these soldiers went to war, they have all the warm clothes and food they needed, but people didn't think about the feet and this "trench foot" reaped havoc amongst the troops.

The result was that troops slowed down, they had to be removed from the field and they couldn't advance.

Paul is saying here....

This gospel of peace, it covers your feet.

This gospel of peace it protects our feet.

It keeps us mobile and in the fight.

This gospel is the foundation for you life.

This gospel with keep you stable.

This gospel with keep you moving forward in all conditions regardless of the opposition.

So...what is this gospel of peace?

This gospel:

This word “gospel” means to announce, to proclaim to declare something, especially good news.

For example here we have the most widely known proclamation of Good News.

We have the angel declaring...

Luke 2:10-11 ESV

(10) And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

(11) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

In the NT this term gospel is used to denote the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God.

The revelation of Christ and the grace and mercy of God granted through Him is the best news that a person can ever hear.

William Gurnell says of this gospel that:

It is such a unique message that no good news can come before it and no bad news can follow it.

For news to be truly good it must:

1. Be better than anything I have ever heard before.
2. It must be personal....it must be good news to me.
3. It must be guaranteed and trustworthy news...I must be able to rely on the source.

No one hears bad news and is joyful:

People don't ever hear bad news and rejoice.

So in order for this to be good news it must have possibility to all.

This news declares possibility and hope for all mankind.

That there is forgiveness in the sight of God.
There is grace and hope in Jesus Christ.

See this is the sort of news that everybody needs to hear.

This is the sort of news that needs to undergird our life.

That no matter what we face, our God is an awesome God and he is able to deliver us from the ravages and effects of sin.

The mercy granted to us in Christ changes the very nature of bad news.

Think of it...the moment you received a revelation of eternal forgiveness, the moment you came to understand what Christ had truly done for you, death its self loses its power, its sting over you.

Life can throw curve balls at us, but they no longer have the damaging impact or the effect on us who have this good news, that they once would have. All disasters, all obstacles, and all challenges are now put into an eternal instead of temporal context.

This good news doesn't detach us from reality, it has changed our reality.

We lived as all men lived until WE got this good news.

We were once overwhelmed by life, overcome by the day today pressure of existence, many of us distraught and despondent.

But now we have GOOD NEWS!

News that is the gentle whisper in our soul in the midst of what ever we are suffering.

It is an eternal assurance of our deliverance and provision in this life and the life to come.

Friend that is good news!!

It is the best news you have every heard!

Good news must be my news:

This good news must be news that affects me personally.
It cannot just be random news.

It cannot just be something broadcast to all and sundry with no immediate personal impact.

You sit at home burdened by debt and worry.
You hear about someone in Alaska winning the lottery and it doesn't encourage you, it doesn't enrich your life.

You hear of a distant family member having all of their debts cleared and cancelled and you are interested, you want to know how they obtained such a great prize.

But if I was to come to you and say I have a gift that is so incredible, it will lift the burden off you and your family for 1000 generations that your debts will be erased not just for all time, but for eternity...would you not see that as good news?

Would you not see that as personal good news?

This good news must be guaranteed:

So...not only must this news be good news
Not only must this news be my news.

But this news, to be good news, must be certain news, guaranteed news, trustworthy news.

Disappointment arises out of unmet expectations.

We have all been in situations where we have longed for something, hoped for something, been told something is coming only for it to be delayed and cancelled.

And we are shattered.
Let down.
Disappointed.

In order for this news to be truly good news then it has to be certain.

It has to come with a guarantee.

And for me here lies the true wonder of this gospel.

It has been paid in full.

You never have to question whether you are free from the debt of sin...Christ's blood paid that price.

You never have to wonder if the enemy has been defeat...Christ's blood paid that price.

You never have to wonder as to the assurance of your deliverance or salvation...Christ's blood paid that price.

This is Good news.
This is my news.
This is certain news.

This news gives me peace.

This gospel of peace:

It is not just general good news, it is not just a general gospel that Paul is talking about here.

But he is talking very specifically to a warrior with warriors concerns and warriors fears.

It is Good news that brings tranquility in the face of uncertainty, in the face of obstacles, in the face of a battle, in the midst of battling enemy.

So many people have taught and lead others to believe that the absence of struggle means that we are a true Christian warrior, friend it is exactly the opposite.

Pain means you're alive.
The moment you stop struggling is the moment you start dying.

It is the struggle that makes the victory sweet.

Derek Pounstone is Americas strongest man and the forth strongest man in the world.

In 2006 he ruptured his L4/L5 disc in his back with massive spinal cord hemorrhaging.

He was told he would never lift again, 2 weeks later he did a personal best dead lift of 855 lbs, 50 pounds heavier than he had ever done. He won the national strong man title 12 months later.

He ripped his pectoral muscle in half the week before the Arnold Classic World Event in 2008 and could only use one hand to do overhead circus dumbbell presses greater than 200 lbs.

He came in second.

He said:

*“Pain is a lie your brain tells your body when it is scared and doesn’t want to keep working.
Once you know it is fear, you learn to push past it, that is where the big gains are”.*

Paul is in the last days of his life.

He is looking back over it and looking down the tunnel of time at the church ahead.

He looks over at a young warrior and thinks...this gospel...does not give me the absence of struggle, but peace in the midst of struggle.

This good news of peace is very personal.

It is mine.

It is certain.

It is a guarantee.

That no matter what I am faced with in life, no matter what obstacles I as a warrior for Christ come up against, my God is for me.

Often soldiers on the front line talk of the stress they face of being far away from home and not having any one to help their families in times of need.

There not being anyone to help when the dryer breaks down or the lawn needs cutting.

I remember once travelling, I was in Texas preaching and my wife and children were at home in Australia.

New neighbors had moved in and were having an outrageous party. They were the stars of the nation’s biggest football team and they were on a championship run, no one could touch them, no one could interfere with them.

It was late; Beccy went over and asked them to turn the music down.

They threatened to rape her and burn the house down.

She rang me in Texas cowering in our bedroom with the kids.

I remember I got to praying, I was distressed, distraught and depressed. It didn't seem right, there was nothing I could do, and there was no way I could help.

You know what I got....peace.
I was fighting for Him,
He would fight for me.

I could not change the situation, He however could watch over it.

A friend turned up and stayed the night and made sure she was ok.

The football club wouldn't help,
It accused her of being hysterical, of lying; they said they would do nothing about it.

She got to praying...that championship team lost every game that season from that point on.

Within 12 months all of the managers were exposed as corrupt and the club went into bankruptcy.

I wanted peace, God wanted payback.

Isn't that the sort of peace a warrior wants?

A gospel of peace for His family and the destruction of his enemies.

This gospel of a Savior that loves me and is for me, means that God has got my back as I march forward to engage my enemy.

Are we ready?

(15) And, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

So these shoes are a firm foundation.

This good news gives us peace.

But this good news should also give us a sense of urgency and readiness..

Friend let me ask you a question....

- Are you ready to give an account?
- Are you prepared to stand and meet your foe?
- Is your foundation sure?
- Are you confident?
- Are you resolute?

If you want to stand, you can not rush in there barefooted, you have to know this gospel and its implication on your life.

I see large numbers of Christians running around bare foot.

They give no time to know what they believe and they throw themselves daily in the battle to be pounded on by an enemy who hates them.

I see them slipping in their personal life.

Giving room to relationship and activities that drag them away from the cross.

Men no longer stand, they are too willing to compromise...*the devil made me do it...rubbish...*

The devil has no power over you that you do not give him.

People slip and slide on doctrine.
They don't want to make a stand to upset anyone.
They don't want to offend anyone all the time compromising.
All the time giving ground.
All the time slipping back.

Let me ask you this....Is there anything for which you are prepared to stand?

Is there anything that you are prepared to stand up for and say...no, I am sorry, you're wrong, that is not acceptable, that is not what God would have me do.

Or are you spineless?

I know it may offend your sensibilities.... But then maybe that is the problem, people have spent their life catering to your weakness instead of speaking to your greatness.

Are you prepared to make a stand for the Word?

Are you prepared to declare it as God's truth, immutable and inerrant?

Will you stand for the virgin birth?

For the miracles?

For the supernatural?

Or will you continue to have a form of godliness but deny the power that lies behind it?

You have to know what it is you believe.

You have to know what it is that you will stand for.

Only when you understand what this gospel has done for you, can it give you peace.

Preferences are negotiable, Convictions are not.

You need to know your minimums and not move from them.

You need to know where your line is and die protecting it.

You need to draw that line and say....you can go around me if you wish, but do not try and move me, because this is what I believe and that is all there is to it.

Tell them...I don't want to go to war with you, but if you mess with me and mine I stand and defend it to the end.

I want to end today with probably my favorite Bible story.

It is the story of one of David's mighty men.

It is a story of a warrior who would not be moved.

Who stood his ground against insurmountable odds because he just got sick of being pushed around by the enemy.

2 Samuel 23:11-12 ESV

(11) And next to him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the men fled from the Philistines.

(12) But he took his stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the LORD worked a great victory.

The valor of some men is depend and upon the crowd, but real warrior will stand alone against all odds for the principal of a thing.

Shammah was from a family of mountaineers.

They lived in the mountains around the Dead Sea which is a very dry land, a desolate place.

But even mountain men have to eat.

So they had farmed this piece of land and it was their land.

They had prepared it sown it, water it, and now it was ready to harvest.

Invading armies would often raid villages and isolate people at harvest time to strip their land bare to keep them hungry, subdued and fearful and they would go back year after year to the easy places, the places of least resistance.

The philistines did not just sent a small crew into this part of the mountains; tradition says that between 300-800 philistines came to attack this village and take what they thought was there's to plunder.

Maybe they had been there before and there hadn't been any opposition.

Maybe Shammah as a young boy had run and hid, maybe as a man he had run and hid when the raiders came to town.

But not this day.

This day this says that all the men of the village ran.

And Shaamman didn't.

He walked to the middle of the plot of lentils and stood and waited.

He didn't sit at the edges, where he could be tempted to run.
He didn't make a stand by the side where the enemy maybe tempted to leave him be.

No he stood right in the middle.
He came to a simple discussion.

Today I live.
Or today I die.

But I will do it standing.
I will no longer bow to the enemy.
I will no longer bow to compromise.
I will no longer bow to the fear that is around me.

I will stand.

What about you friend?

In what area of your life have you bowed?

In what area of your life have you given ground?

Shaamah had no guarantees, but I can assure you he had peace.

When you have nothing to lose, you have nothing to lose.

He was no longer going to cower.
He was no longer going to move.

And a great victory was won because one man made a decision not to be moved.

Not be swayed by the world.

His family.

His friends.

His past.

His fears.

This is not the year for preferential resolutions but firm convictions...

What is it that God has asked you to stand for?

What is it that God has asked you to do time and time again and you have not done it because you have been fearful?

It is time friend.