

The Shoes Of Peace

Ephesians 6:15

Pastor John Miller

Have you ever noticed how many different kinds of shoes there are in the world today? You know, we have dress shoes, casual shoes, shoes for all different sports and activities. We have bowling shoes, which are kind of dorky looking, but if you have to bowl, I guess you wear bowling shoes. You have baseball shoes, football shoes, basketball shoes, tennis shoes—you name it! There are so many kinds of footwear in the world today. I believe the most important footwear that anyone can wear is the footwear of a soldier because his very life depends upon them. Can you imagine being out in battle and having bare feet or your feet not being clad with good footwear for stability and mobility? Well, I believe that we as believers are in a spiritual battle and the most important aspect of our armor is our feet, believe it or not. God has provided for us (we saw several weeks ago) first, the belt of truth, then the breastplate of righteousness (verse 14), and tonight we come to Ephesians 6:15. I want you to look at it with me. Paul says, “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Your feet are to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. So, “...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” God has given us a belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and now God has provided shoes or sandals that we are to wear of peace.

This verse (verse 15) is the most awkward phrase in the list of the Christian armor, and I hesitated to say this, but I want to have honesty with you as I look at this passage. Of all the aspects of armor, I believe that this is perhaps the most challenging on interpreting and understanding. You say, “Well, why is that?” Well, I would point out by observation that there is no mention of any specific piece of armor. He says, “...your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” He doesn’t actually name a piece of armor (all he mentions is our feet), but we’re assuming (and I think rightfully so) that our feet have shoes on them, or in the case of the Roman soldier, we have sandals. It’s interesting that he doesn’t mention the belt, which the soldier wore a belt. He doesn’t mention a breastplate. He doesn’t mention the sword. He doesn’t mention the shield. There is not the mention of a helmet. Those are all clear aspects of the armor of God, but when he comes to the feet he says, “And your feet shod with the preparation..., and that’s a real challenging word to interpret, “preparation” or readiness, “...of the gospel of peace.” There is no specific mention of armor. We’re assuming that he’s implying that there is something upon our feet.

The second thing I’d like to point out is when Paul makes the application he uses three words. He uses the word “preparation” or readiness, and it conveys the idea of being ready or prepared or having a foundation. Secondly, he uses the word “gospel.” Thirdly, he uses the word “peace.” Here’s the problem, he doesn’t tell us what the focus is. He doesn’t tell us where the emphasis lies. He mentions “preparation,” “gospel,” and “peace,” but there is not a clear statement as to which it is. Are we supposed to be “prepared” or are we supposed to preach the “gospel” or stand in the “gospel,” and are we supposed to focus on the “peace?” Which of

the three is really in Paul's mind as he makes the statement? You say, "Well, Pastor Miller, you're really doing a great job so far. You've introduced your text, read your text, and said basically you don't know what's going on." I haven't got a clue. That's true but not true. I think that we maybe can't be dogmatic about what Paul is trying to convey here, but we can draw from other Scriptures and from the grammar that Paul uses in the Greek and kind of come to a conclusion. I believe Paul is putting the emphasis on the preparation for the gospel of peace and that we should be ready. The "preparation" is be ready as it pertains to the gospel, and this is the gospel of peace. It really would include all three of those in our emphasis.

What kind of shoe did the Roman Soldier wear? Well, basically it was a sandal, and it was made out of heavy leather. It was open-toed. The sides were solid leather, the bottom of the sandal...a lot of the leather in the sandal was about three-quarters inch thick. There were straps that went up the ankle and thigh. It was an open-toed leather sandal with straps that ran up the thigh, and the significant part about it was that it had spikes on the bottom or what they called hobnob. It had little pieces of metal or steel or little hollow nails that the Romans had devised at the bottom of the sandal. It would be kind of like a golf shoe or a football spike or something that was like an athletic shoe with spikes on the bottom. It would give somebody the ability to stand in the face of a battle. Now again, can you imagine having on your belt, breastplate, and helmet, having your shield and sword—you're all clad for battle—but you're going out into battle, "Ooo, ow, ooo, ow ow ooo ooo!" You're just Mr. Tenderfoot out there. (The older I get the more tender my feet get. I remember when you were young you could just haul around the place on bare feet all the time, and now that you're an old man, you've gotta have shoes on.) I can't imagine with the rocks, the dirt roads, the heat, the thorns, and the things that could damage your feet, if a soldier lost his feet then he couldn't fight. If you can't stand, you can't fight. If you can't stand, you can't progress, you can't march; so these sandals were to give them the ability to march and to stand.

There are two things that come to mind when we think of the Roman soldier's sandal or footwear. These are the two that I want to focus on, very short and simple; that is, (1) they provided mobility and (2) they provided stability. (So, if you're taking notes you might want to write that down.) Those are the two primary things conveyed in this Roman sandal—mobility and stability. I believe that the focus involves both of them. First of all, it provided mobility. It's a readiness to make the gospel known. Have "...your feet shod with the preparation," the word is be ready and prepared to preach the gospel and to share the gospel, not just with words but by the way that you live. It may be that Paul was looking at a Roman soldier. He was under arrest. He was under house arrest. He was basically in prison. It's called his Prison Epistle, but he was under house arrest. He rented his own house, but he was chained to a Roman soldier. No doubt, he was actually looking at a Roman soldier and saw the belt and the breastplate. He saw the shoes and was thinking in terms of our spiritual warfare and spiritual battle. It's also possible that Paul had Isaiah 52:7 in mind where the prophet said, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." The concept is that our feet become beautiful when we take or carry the gospel or the good news.

What is the gospel? If we're going to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace we need to know what the gospel is. There is a lot of confusion today about what the gospel is, but the New Testament gives us a clear definition in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul says the gospel is "...that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures...that Christ was buried, and that he rose again the third day;" so you have the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the "good news." The gospel is the "good news" what? "Good news" that God has provided salvation in Jesus Christ. Bad news—all have sinned; all have fallen short of the glory of God; no one righteous, no not one; the wages of sin is death. The good news—the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Did you know that we are carriers or bearers of "good news?" There's not much good news in the world today, right? You and I, as believers, have "good news." The "good news" that God loves you; "good news" that God can forgive your sins; "good news" that you can have eternal life; "good news" that when you die you can spend eternity in heaven. You can know where you're going to spend all eternity, that you can become a child of God, all your sins can be forgiven, and you can have the hope of heaven. Satan hates this "good news." Satan hates this message. One of his number one tactics is to dilute it, to pervert it, to water it down. "Oh, you can get to heaven by being good. Oh, you can get to heaven by just being religious. Oh, you can get to heaven by just being sincere. All religions lead to God," and on and on the list goes. Satan's number one tactic is to pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith," I'm quoting from Ephesians 2:8-9, "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. We were dead in our sins. We were depraved in our sinful nature; but God, who is rich in mercy, loved us and sent Jesus Christ. When He came, He came as the Son of God—God in flesh, God incarnate, God and man in one Person. He willingly voluntarily went to the Cross and gave His life on the Cross for our sins. It's called the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, and that's what the Bible teaches—Jesus gave Himself on the Cross for us. (When we break this bread tonight and drink the cup, it's a symbol of the body and the blood of Christ. It's a typos or a type, a picture, of His broken body and of His shed blood.) The death of Jesus Christ was the substitutionary death—He died in your place. That's the "good news." The "good news" is that He took your place. He paid the penalty for your sins, but satan wants to pervert the gospel.

I believe that every Christian should know and understand the gospel and be able to communicate it to others. You may not be on a pulpit, you may not be on a platform, but you ought to be able to explain to anyone you meet how they can be saved, how they can go to heaven. I encounter people all the time, "Well, I've got an unsaved friend. Can I bring him in for you to talk to?" "I've got an unsaved friend, would you come over to my house for dinner and save him for me?" People do that to me all the time. It's like, "You want me to come to your house and lead your friend to Christ? Well, what's wrong with you?" "Well, you just do it so much better. You just know what you're saying. You gotta do it. You're a professional, you get paid for doing that whole thing." I believe every member of our church is to be a minister, and one of the reasons we teach the Bible on Wednesday, Sunday, throughout the week, and

everything we do is so that you will be equipped to tell others about Jesus Christ. There's only one of me, and there's a whole bunch of you. Can you imagine after church, when you are dispersed, you're all evangelists, and outside these doors is the mission field—go ye into all the world and preach the gospel! That's what it's all about. Amen? And what an impact we as Revival Christian Fellowship can make on this community.

I don't go anywhere in this valley but what people know who I am, recognize me, see me; and everywhere I go, any business I go into, there's always somebody from the church there. When I'm kind of goofing off, my wife always reminds me, "John, straighten up, someone from the church is watching you." It doesn't matter if the Lord's watching, someone from the church is watching me. But I'm often reminded about that—you know, this car dealership, that restaurant, this business, this place, this office—you, like salt and light, go out all over this valley. Some of you commute to San Diego. Some of you go to Orange County. Some of you go into L.A., the high desert. You go all over the place. It's like you're salt, just put out of the salt shaker, to be salt and light; so I believe that we all should be ready to give to every man an answer for the reason of the hope that lies in us.

Why does satan hate the gospel? Write down Romans 1:16. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power..." the dynamis, "...the power of God unto salvation... to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," to anyone who believes. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:15, that we should "...sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give," to anyone that asks us, "...a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear," with respect and reverence. When we share the gospel we should do it respectfully, humbly, and graciously. We shouldn't be obnoxious. If people are offended by the truth, that's great; but they shouldn't be offended by us. We should speak the truth in love. Jesus has given to us, as well, our marching orders. It is called the Great Commission, not the great suggestion. "Go ye into all the world, and preach..." what? The gospel—the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's about a Person. Go into all the world and preach the gospel—that's the job, that's the commission for us as believers—that sinners can have peace with God.

Lastly, not only is the sandal of the Roman soldier for mobility but also for stability. It's for him to be swift on his feet and mobile. Alexander the Great was able to conquer so many places because they had good shoes or sandals for his soldiers. It's also for stability and great balance. I haven't ever boxed, but the little bit of boxing that I've done with my son at home and when I was a younger boy with other friends...when I was a little boy, the cousins used to get together. We'd put a bunch of socks on our hands and go into the back bedroom where we'd box with each other. I remember that when you're boxing, if you lose your footing or if your feet slip, you're wiped out! You need to have sure footedness. Satan wants to get a lot of Christians off balance—he wants to knock them off balance—so he robs us of our peace, attacks us, and comes against us. I believe the "gospel of peace" gives us a stability in this sense. Notice in verses 13 and 14 he'd mentioned standing and talked about, "...that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand;" and again he repeats it in verse 14, "Stand therefore;" and I believe that when it comes to verse 15 and talks about the sandals, that they are for stability.

When Satan attacks us, he wants to rob us of our peace so that we will be unable to stand and be ineffective. Just as a soldier couldn't battle or fight without sandals or shoes, nor can the Christian be effective in the work of God and against the attacks of the enemy if you don't have the sandals of peace. Satan attacks us but we can stand in God's peace. God's peace comes to us the moment we believe the gospel and we are born again, we have what is called the peace of God. Now, there are two kinds of peace that the believer has. Initially, at conversion, you have peace with God. As you grow in sanctification, you experience the peace of God, so the gospel gives me stability in the storms of life. It's the gospel of God's grace, and it's the gospel of God's peace. Satan comes and wants me to worry, be afraid, doubt, be discouraged, to give up. Satan comes and wants me to kind of throw in the towel—I don't want to pray, read, or serve the Lord anymore—so I need to stand against these attacks in the gospel of peace and in the grace of God.

I want you to keep your place here in Ephesians 6, but flip with me to Philippians 4 where Paul gives us some clear teaching on the subject of experiencing God's peace or the peace of God. Notice verse 7, "And the peace of God," not peace with God but now the peace of God, that subjective experience of trusting God in the midst of the storms of life, "which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Satan wants to rob you of your peace and make you ineffective in your Christian life, but the question is: How can I experience this peace of God? By the way (verse 7), when he says it keeps your hearts and your minds, the word "keep" is a military term. It means to guard or garrison, so picture this fortress, that God wants to put this wall around two things, around your hearts and your minds—around your emotions and your thoughts. Those are areas where Satan will attack you. He's going to attack you in the area of your emotions. He's going to attack you in the area of your thought life and in your mind, but God wants to have His peace surround you or guard or garrison and protect you from the attacks of the enemy.

How can we experience this peace of God standing in this good news of God's grace and God's peace? The first point I would make is by learning how to pray properly. Go back with me to verse 6. He says, "Be careful for nothing," that's basically, don't worry about anything, "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Here's step number 1. If you're going to experience the peace of God you have to pray properly—prayer. You know, sometimes people get upset when we say, "Don't worry, pray." "Well, prayer is not enough. I've gotta have something concrete to really do." You can do more after you pray, but you can't do anything until you pray—you got that? We run all around doing everything we can, and when it's all over someone says, "Have you prayed?" You go, "Oh, ya! I forgot." That's like the last resort. If we can't work it out and it's really, really bad then, "Let us pray," rather than the first thing we do is take it to God in prayer. We run to the Lord.

I love the Living Bible translation. It says, "Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. Tell God your needs and don't forget to thank Him for His answers." He mentions prayer, which is the general word for prayer. He mentions supplication, which is earnest, fervent praying for oneself; and then he mentions thanksgiving. Don't forget to give thanks to the Lord. I believe a lot of times when we pray and we give it to God, then we should just take our hands

off of it and begin to thank God for His answers. Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank Him for His answers. You say, "Well, He hasn't answered me yet." Thank Him anyway—thank Him that He loves you, that He's in control, that whatever He does is going to be good. You need to love and trust God enough that whatever God does in response to your prayer, you know it's going to be good. Amen? God only does good things; and by the way, God always answers prayer.

I meet people who say, "I prayed and God didn't answer." I say, "Yes, He did. He said no." "Yeah, but I don't like that. I wanted Him to say yes, and I wanted it to be right away!" We kind of have our shopping list of, "God, do this, do this, and it's gotta be done by Friday night 5 o'clock in Jesus name, amen; and if You don't, I won't go to church this Sunday and I will not tithe another time." Like God's going, "Oh, no! What will I do?" Learn to thank God for even unanswered prayer. Do you want to know why? Because God knows better than we do. Amen? "I prayed and I prayed and I prayed and God said no," because God knew that you didn't need it or God knew that He would give you something different or God knew that the time was not right or God knew that you weren't ready to receive the answer to the prayer. You know, prayer is not just getting what we want from God, prayer is also aligning my will with the will of God. Do you know what prayer does? Prayer is like time exposure to God. It's like God taking us into the darkroom and developing His image on the sensitive plates of our lives. Prayer is not just changing things, prayer is changing me! It's time exposure to God where God can actually change my heart and change my attitude. A lot of times we have to be ready to receive the answer that God wants to give.

I think of Hannah who prayed for a son, and God wanted to give her a son. Finally, she came and said, "Lord, if you give me a son, I'll dedicate him back to you all the days of his life," and God goes CLAP "You got it! That's exactly what I was waiting for. I was waiting for you to tell Me that when I gave you that son that you were going to give him back to Me." We need to be willing to say, "Lord, whatever Your will is." That's actually greater faith than dictating to God about what He's going to do. It's actually trusting God that He'll do what is perfect and right and good, bring Him glory, and for my good.

The second thing you need to do is think right—not only pray right but think right. Look at verse 8. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Remember, the peace of God will keep your heart and your mind (your emotions and your thoughts), so you cast your cares upon the Lord, you pray, you supplicate, you give thanks, you don't worry, and then you set your mind on what is true and honest and pure and lovely, of good report, and virtuous. Those are the things that you need to focus and think on.

The third step to experiencing the peace of God is in verse 9. "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen," notice they learn them, they receive them, they heard them (oral teaching came from Paul), and they saw them in Paul's life, "in me," and here's the point, "do: and the God of peace shall be with you." You actually have to put them

into practice. You know, you're to be commended that you're here on Wednesday night in Bible study and fellowship in a church and that's wonderful, but it doesn't do you any good to just hear the Word of God taught if you don't put it into practice in your life. If you're just a hearer of the Word only and not a doer, then you're deceiving yourself. James says you're like a person that looks into a mirror and sees himself and then turns away immediately forgetting what they just saw in the mirror.

Do you know what mirrors are for? To show you you need help! I don't know what it is lately, but every morning when I get up my hair is just bizarre. It's just all going south! Everybody is like, "Pastor, Miller, you've got such awesome hair." When I do Q&As after preaching sometimes the first question is, "Is your hair for real?" "Where'd you get your hair?" "What'd you do to have hair," and stuff like that. You should see my hair in the morning. It is just insane, so I thank God for my mirror. If I showed up and my hair was all spaced out you'd go, "Pastor, Miller, have you looked in the mirror recently? Uh, I recommend you go back home and look in the mirror." Why? Because it shows you your need, but a mirror doesn't fix your hair! Have you ever noticed that the mirror doesn't make you look better? You know, you don't just look in the mirror SWOOSH! your hair goes perfect. "Thank you, mirror," magic mirror fixes you up. You've got to wash your face, you've got to shave (I shave, not the ladies), and you've got to brush your teeth, comb your hair, put some gel on your hair and get it all going. You've got to get in and put some action into seeing what's messed up, right? (You're supposed to say, "Yes." Okay, thank you.) You guys are all looking at me like, "You've got problems, man!" You know you're messed up when you wake up in the morning and you look in the mirror it's like, "Whoa, I need help," you know. You wash your face, fix yourself up. The ladies do makeup or whatever it might be, but that analogy right there in the book of James is like looking in the mirror and just going, "Oh, yeah, I'm really messed up. Okay, I'll see ya!" You just go walking off and don't do anything about it! What good is that? The purpose of the Word of God is to show you your need and to drive you to the Lord and let the Holy Spirit transform, cleanse, renew, and change us.

I was thinking about submarines out in the ocean. Did you ever think about a submarine when they're on the top of the surface of the ocean and if a big storm came they would be buffeted by the storm, but a submarine can obviously submerge under the surface at quite great depths. There can be just the fiercest of storms raging on the surface of the ocean and the submarine can just be cruising without any buffeting under the sea. I believe that as Christians we can be in the midst of a storm, in the midst of a trial or a difficulty or a hardship, and we can submerge ourselves in Christ, in His peace, and standing on His grace; and even though satan assails us and attacks our minds and our hearts, we can have the peace of God. John Newton, the man that wrote the song "Amazing Grace" wrote these beautiful words. He said,

Though many foes beset me round,

And feeble is my arm,

My life is hid with Christ in God,

Beyond the realm of harm.

I love that! When you submerge yourself in the gospel and in the peace and grace of God, then you will not experience the storms that are raging around you. Tonight, some of you are being buffeted by storms; and Satan has robbed you of your joy, your peace, and your effectiveness in the Christian life. The gospel brings me the peace with God—my standing—and it also brings me the grace of God because it's the gospel of God's grace and I learn to stand in grace, and when I stand in grace, guess what I experience? Peace.

When Paul opened many of his New Testament epistles, he opened with a greeting or a salutation. You know, the order was always the same, grace and peace. We just read that and don't really think about it, but did you know that it's always grace and then peace? You can't experience the peace of God until you understand and experience the grace of God. When you realize, I'm saved by grace. I'm kept by grace. I stand in Christ by His grace, no merits of my own—I didn't do anything to save myself, and I don't do anything to keep myself—and you're resting in God's grace then, and only then, will you experience the peace that God wants you to have. In John 14:27 Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Jesus left us His peace. What a gift!

Are you experiencing His peace tonight? Do your feet have the stability in the storms of life? Are you resting in the grace of God? Are you experiencing the peace of God? It starts with the peace that you have with God through our Lord Jesus Christ—which is salvation or justification—having peace with God, being justified by grace, we have peace with God. Casting my cares upon Him, knowing He cares for me, I experience the peace of God. So, our feet are shod to be able to be mobile to take the gospel of peace, and our feet are shod to be able to stand sure, not be knocked off our balance, and to experience the peace of God when Satan comes to try to assail or attack us. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.