

The Armor of God: Boots of Peace – Ephesians 6:15

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Union Baptist Church – 5/15/2016

I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Well today we're continuing on in our study of the armor of God in Ephesians chapter 6, so if you want to turn there in your Bibles, now would be a good time! If you'll remember, we're in the process of examining the first 3 pieces of armor which Paul indicates need to be firmly in place before we're ready to take up our sword and jump into active warfare. So far we've examined the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness and today we'll look at what I'd like to call the boots of peace.

Let's begin again today, by reading our passage in Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10 to 17:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints...

May the Lord bless the reading of his Word.

Now as we think of what we've studied so far, with the belt of truth we saw that in order to buckle our pants on and be ready for undistracted, active warfare, we need to reject the world's definition of truth and come to know, instead, that in the Bible we have the only completely reliable source of unchanging, absolute truth, written by God himself and preserved for us to use as the perfect guidebook for living in the universe he designed and created. Without this trust in the Word of God and without immersing ourselves in it constantly, we will be an easy target for the enemy's lies and will be completely unequipped for the battle.

Then last week, with the breastplate of righteousness, we saw that the perfect righteousness we receive from God when we turn from our sin and trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, provides the ultimate protection from Satan's swords and daggers with which he's aggressively trying to take our heart and vital organs. We got in our minds a picture of God's righteousness looking like a majestic, snow-covered mountain, while our attempts at righteousness are better represented by Pig Pen from the Charlie Brown comic strip. And yet we saw that when we trust in Christ as our Savior and Lord, God credits his righteousness to our account and Satan's attempts to shake our faith and point out our unworthiness lose all their power, because our salvation and acceptance to God is not based on our perfect performance, but on Christ and his perfect work on the cross. Christ's righteousness is impenetrable and we put it on like a breastplate when we come to new life in Christ.

However, we also saw that when we come to new life in Christ, God calls us to grow in practical righteous living as we walk by the Spirit and allow him to have his way in our lives. This growing personal righteousness will make us stronger in the battle, but we always need to remember that our protection and security and forever status as a child of God is based on Christ's righteousness and not on our own perfect performance.

I want you to notice that there's an important sequence in the pieces of armor we've studied so far, and this sequence will continue as we examine the boots of peace today. First, without believing that the Bible is true, we won't accept the message of salvation through Christ that it provides. The belt of truth involves trusting in the truth of the Bible and allowing it to be our guide and map for life in God's universe. Secondly, when we've accepted that the Bible is truth, we're

then ready to accept its message of salvation through faith in Christ alone. And when we do that we put on the breastplate of Christ's righteousness.

So now we've got pants on and protection for our heart and vital organs. But we still need one thing before we're ready to pick up our sword and move out. We need boots if we're going to be able to walk and run and fight a battle. Doing it barefoot just isn't going to work. And this is what we're going to examine today, what do we need in order to put boots on our feet and be equipped to start walking and fighting in the battle?

II. THE BOOTS OF PEACE

A. Ephesians 6:15 Analysis

1. The Context

So let's start by taking a closer look at our verse for today, Ephesians 6, verse 15. Paul says, "***and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace...***" I don't know about you, but in reading this verse over the years I typically took this as meaning that I needed to be ready to share the gospel with other people. I heard Paul saying that this piece of armor was about preparing ahead of time to share the gospel, memorizing the key verses and being ready at any moment to share the one way of salvation through Jesus Christ.

And certainly that is something each of us as believers in Christ are called to do. The apostle Peter in 1st Peter 3, verse 15, tells us to always be "***ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you...***" And of course the final words of Jesus before he ascended into heaven were a command to go into all the world and make disciples. Clearly we are each called to be ready to present the gospel, the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, at any moment and we do have a responsibility to prepare for doing this ahead of time. But in looking closer at this verse and considering the context, I don't believe that's what Paul's talking about here.

Looking at the context we need to remember, looking back to verses 13 and 14, that Paul is telling us here how to resist and stand firm against the spiritual forces of wickedness. He's telling us about the armor we each need to protect ourselves

personally from the devil's lies and his relentless attacks that target our faith and trust in God. While being ready to share the gospel with other people is an essential responsibility for each of us, that just doesn't seem to be what Paul is referring to here. Being ready to share the gospel with others doesn't seem to be what we need to fight back against Satan's personal attack on us.

2. Greek Analysis

So let's look at verse 15 a little closer and see if there might be something else Paul is telling us here. First of all you'll notice that word, "shod"...having shod your feet. The preparation of the gospel peace is what we are to shod our feet with. Now the meaning of the original Greek word translated, "shod," has to do with binding something on your feet and was used specifically of binding sandals, the footwear that was used during Paul's day.

So the preparation of the gospel peace is basically the shoes, or probably more appropriately, the boots we need for the spiritual battle we're facing. The *IVP Bible Background Commentary* says that: "Soldiers needed to wear sandals or boots (technically the Roman *caliga*, a half boot) so they could advance toward the enemy undistracted about what they might step on; this gear was essential to their 'preparation' for battle."

And when you think about boots or shoes, why are they needed? First of all, they protect the bottom of our feet and allow us to walk and run long distances without destroying our soles (no pun intended!). I have a hard time just walking out to the mailbox in my bare feet without tiptoeing along and experiencing pain on the sharp rocks. But with shoes or boots I have no problem. And even though we can build up really thick calluses if we walk barefoot a lot, those calluses still do not provide as good of protection as boots and they offer nothing to protect the tops of our feet which are also very sensitive and shouldn't be exposed in a battle. If our feet are taken out in a battle, we're done and movement is no longer possible except for what little we could do on our hands and knees. So the preparation of the gospel of peace is what Paul is telling us provides the protection we need for our feet and the boots we need to be able to move forward in the battle, undistracted and able to travel long distances.

So let's look a little closer at the key words in this phrase, "the preparation of the gospel of peace." First let's remember that the word translated, "gospel," simply means good news or glad tidings. We're talking here about the good news of peace. Secondly the Greek word translated, "preparation," speaks of readiness or preparedness. The idea is that of someone being ready for action or ready for movement in the context we're talking about here.

3. The Boots We Need

What I believe Paul is telling us here in verse 15 of Ephesians chapter 6, is that the boots we need to put on are: *the readiness that comes from the good news of peace*. In other words, what makes us ready to walk out into battle and able to move around quickly and effectively is our heart understanding of the good news of the permanent peace we now have with God through Jesus Christ.

This peace with God and why we have it is perfectly stated for us in Romans 5, verses 1 through 5:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

This peace with God is something we each have right now, if we've trusted in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. This is a permanent peace with God that's possible not because of our works, but because we've been justified by faith in Christ. And this is good news... extremely good news that when fully understood, makes us ready to move out in the battle!

Paul also spoke of this peace we now have earlier in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 13 to 18:

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one

new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

We've been brought near to God the Father by the blood of Christ and now have direct access to him through the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself is our peace. And the peace we now have is a reality because of his work and not ours. Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the requirements of the Law and offered himself as a perfect sacrifice to bear the wrath of the Father that we deserved for our sins. God's wrath for our sins has been completely poured out and satisfied by Christ's work on the cross and we now have peace with the Father instead of being constantly under his wrath, the place where every human being lives prior to new life in Christ.

B. The Importance of Peace in Relationships (James 3:16)

I want you to think for a moment about the importance of peace in relationships. Try to get in your mind right now a relationship that you've had that was not peaceful...one that's been characterized by anger, bitterness, fighting, arguing, and hard feelings. Or maybe think of a relationship where you felt that you were constantly under the anger or disapproval of someone. If you have one of those relationships in your mind now, I want you to think about how effective you and that other person were at accomplishing things together, experiencing joy in your relationship with each other, and supporting and encouraging one another. You were probably at a dead zero in each of these categories, don't you think? Strife and lack of peace in relationships completely destroys joy and effectiveness and cooperation and causes incredible amounts of time to be wasted with anxiety, mental re-hashing of situations, and usually bad-talking about the other person.

I went through a time period in my relationship with my Dad where we had no peace in our relationship. I had a constant bad attitude toward him and felt I was always under his disapproval. And as you can imagine, this had a very negative effect on our relationship. I felt constant anger toward him and wanted nothing to do with him. I also did everything I could to avoid him and keep him at a distance.

Fortunately God healed our relationship over time and took away those feelings of anger, restoring us to peace with each other. He moved me from that place where I wanted to keep my Dad as far away from me as possible, to where I now love and enjoy spending time with him. And I can still remember the emotions I felt when I finally heard those words I thought I'd never hear, "I'm proud of you, son."

Peace in relationships is life transforming and enables us to move forward together boldly, rather than wasting our time with strife and anger and bitterness. And what I'd like to ask you today is: have you accepted the peace you now have with God through Christ, or are you still viewing yourself as under his constant wrath and disapproval? Do you view your heavenly Father the way I viewed my Dad for so long? Are you still trying to attain a certain level of performance before you'll feel like he accepts and loves you? Can you imagine him saying right now, "I'm proud of you, son," or "I'm proud of you, my daughter;" or does that seem like something out of the realm of possibility.

C. The Good News of Permanent Peace with God Through Christ (Romans 5:1-6; Ephesians 2:13-18; Colossians 1:19-20)

Well, in order to put on the boots of peace we need to grasp at the heart level the truth that we right now and forever have peace with God because of Christ. We've permanently moved from being under the wrath and disapproval of the Almighty Judge of the universe, to being the beloved children of a perfect heavenly Father. All of the wrath that we each deserve has already been poured out on Jesus Christ, and we've moved from being enemies of God to being his own beloved children. Now he views us, not as constant failures awaiting final judgment, but as his own children whom he loves with an unfailing love.

When we make mistakes in our walk or wander down rabbit trails of sin, God remains faithful to us and his love for us does not change. We still have that permanent peace with him because of Christ and still remain his forever children. He relates to us much like we would relate to our own children in these situations, although infinitely more perfectly than we could ever do as earthly parents. He continues to love us and works aggressively to get us back on the right path, using a wide variety of discipline methods, including allowing us to suffer the consequences of bad choices. God will do what it takes to discipline his

children and teach us how to stay on in his perfect paths. And as we know, discipline is not usually pleasant, but in the end it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

The key that I would like all of us to grasp here as we consider how to put on the boots of peace, is tied up in how we view and relate to our God. Do we view him as a frowning judge who's never satisfied with our performance and is piling up a record of failures for which he'll eventually punish us? Or do we view him as a loving Father with whom we have everlasting peace and who hurts to see us making poor choices, knowing the harm and pain those choices will bring into our lives and the way they will cause us to distance ourselves from him?

This view of our heavenly Father as loving, fully committed and faithful to us through the ups and downs of life is what we need to prepare us to walk forward into battle. We need to know without a doubt that our peace with God and security as his children is forever assured not because of our performance, but because of Christ. We need to know in our hearts that the Father loves us deeply and perfectly as his own children and has given us direct access to him through the Holy Spirit. We need to know with assurance that he is always working for our good and that even the hardest things we experience in our lives have a purpose. We need to know that he is proud of us as his children when we draw near to him and learn to walk by his power. These are the boots we need to walk into battle with effectiveness, confidence and power.

D. Peace in the Midst of Battle (Psalm 55:16-18)

And as we walk into battle, we can be encouraged in knowing that the pages of Scripture are filled with the promise of peace in the midst of battle and in the midst of the most challenging circumstances life can bring our way. There's a beautiful verse in Isaiah chapter 26, verse 12 that describes peace as "quietness and confidence forever." This is where we each can be as we learn to put on the boots of peace, trusting in our good Father and the peace we have with him through Christ. The Blue Letter Bible defines peace as: "the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot..." What a beautiful summing up of what we've seen today in our study.

You may have noticed that joy and peace are often paired up in Scripture. They seem to be very closely associated, intertwined and flowing out of one another. Andy Baxter recently shared with me a great definition of joy that I think ties in closely with the peace we've seen today. He said, "Joy is the persuasive awareness that all is well because of who God is." Our God is perfectly good and trustworthy; his promises are true; our salvation and eternal destiny is based on his work and not our own performance; and we perfect peace and joy in any circumstance when we trust in him.

I want to wrap up today with a few thoughts from Scripture about practical ways we can grow peace in our lives.

1. Jesus Is Our Peace (Micah 5:4-5; Isaiah 9:6; John 14:26-27; John 16:33)

First of all, as we've already discussed today, Jesus is the source of our peace. There's nowhere else in the world we can find lasting and perfect. Have you settled that in your own mind? If you'll remember, one of his names is "Prince of Peace." And in some of his final words to his disciples, he promised to give them peace. In John 14, verse 27, he said: "***Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.***" And in John chapter 16, verse 33, Jesus said: "***These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.***"

If you're looking for more peace in your life, look no further than Jesus Christ. He promises peace to those who look for it in him. And his peace endures in the midst of tribulation and hard times, giving us quietness and confidence forever and the calm assurance that all is well because of who God is and his commitment to us as our loving Father. There's no better source of peace than Jesus Christ.

2. Praying Constantly and Walking by the Spirit Brings Peace (Isaiah 26:3-4; Isaiah 26:12; Romans 8:5-6; Philippians 4:5-7; Romans 15:13)

Secondly, praying constantly and learning to walk by the Spirit brings peace in our lives as we stop depending on ourselves and learn to trust in God instead. Trusting in our own strength and wisdom is a recipe for stress. Trusting in God is a recipe for peace.

Isaiah 26, verses 3 to 4 express this truth well:

3 "The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You. 4 "Trust in the Lord forever, For in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock.

Do you see that promise of perfect peace? It comes when we trust in God and keep our minds fixed on him and his strength and power, rather than our own.

And how about a few verses later in Isaiah 26, verse 12:

***12 Lord, You will establish peace for us,
Since You have also performed for us all our works.***

Peace, again, comes from God and our own realization that he is the One who makes us adequate and gives us strength and power as we trust in him. He is the One who performs all our works as we trust in him and walk forward by the power of his Spirit.

And how about Romans 8, verses 5 and 6:

5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace...

Relying on ourselves and setting our minds on earthly things results in death. But setting our minds on the Spirit and trusting in his strength and power brings life and peace.

And then there are those 2 amazing verses in Philippians chapter 4, verses 5 to 7, a favorite for many of us, reminding us again that peace is found as we express our trust in God, hand over our stress, and seek his strength and wisdom through prayer:

The Lord is near. 6 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

As we seek God and cast our concerns and problems on him, he responds by providing us with the peace that passes understanding, guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Believing and trusting God equals joy and peace and blessing in Scripture...simply believe in him and the truths and promises of his Word and you will find peace.

Paul expresses this truth clearly in Romans 15, verse 13:

13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that joy and peace come through believing...simple trust in God.

3. Knowing and Meditating on God's Word Brings Peace (Psalm 119:165; Proverbs 3:17)

And finally, peace fills our lives when we know and meditate often on the Word of God. Psalm 119, verse 165 says it this way:

65 Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble.

Loving God's Word and immersing ourselves in it brings peace to our lives and keeps us from stumbling. Other Scriptures tell us that God's Word is more precious than gold or silver and shows us the path to blessing and fulfillment in life. The wisdom of God's Word keeps us from trouble and pain and leads us into perfect peace.

Listen to Proverbs 3, verse 17, describing the wisdom of God's Word:

17 Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace.

Don't you want to stay on peaceful paths in your life? God's Word will guide you there.

III. CONCLUSION

So are you ready to put on the boots of peace? Have you come to a practical, heart belief, that you have permanent peace with God through Christ? Do you see him clearly as your loving Father, guiding you, protecting you, disciplining you when necessary, but always loving you the same and working for good in your life? Do you feel secure as his child? Do you know that he's fighting for you? This is where we each need to be as we walk into the battle with quietness and confidence forever, experiencing the peace of knowing that God is on our side forever.

And where are you currently trying to find your peace in life? If you're looking for it anywhere other than in Jesus Christ, you'll be left disappointed and empty. Look for it in the Prince of Peace. Take your eyes off yourself and look full in his wonderful, loving face. Utilize at every opportunity the access he's given you to the very presence of the Father, casting your cares on him, trusting in power to work through you, and experiencing the peace that passes understanding. Breathe God's Word into your life. Meditate on it. Don't take for granted the precious roadmap to peace that's been given to us in the Bible. Read it, study it and do it by the power of the Spirit.

Well, I hope you've seen the sequence now that's been provided to us by Paul in these first 3 pieces of armor. First, we find our perfect source of absolute truth in the unchanging, living Word of God in the Bible. We put on the belt of truth by believing, knowing and immersing ourselves in the truth of God's Word. Second, we accept the one way of salvation presented in the Bible, proclaiming forgiveness, new life and release from the wrath of God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. And in accepting Christ we become clothed with his righteousness. We put on the righteousness of Christ as our breastplate, finding our security and hope and protection from Satan's daggers in Christ's righteousness, not our own. Wearing his breastplate and trusting in his righteousness, there's nothing Satan can do to destroy our heart and vital organs.

And third, we put on the boots of peace as we come to a heart understanding and practical belief that we now have permanent peace with God through Christ and relate to the Father as his own beloved children, rather than enemies under his constant wrath and disapproval. And in this new identity as God's forever

children, with him fighting for us, we're finally ready to pick up our sword and charge into battle with quietness and confidence forever.

Interestingly, each of these pieces of armor also provide us with a roadmap to our growth in Christ and increased effectiveness in battle: 1) knowing and immersing ourselves in God's Word; 2) growing in practical righteous living as we draw near to God and allow his Word and his Spirit to change us from the inside out; and 3) learning to walk in peace in our relationship with others in the body of Christ, working together in unity and cooperation to accomplish God's purposes. Don't you just love the power and depth of God's Word?!

As we close today, this is my prayer for each of us in the words of 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 16: "...may the Lord of peace himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance." May he equip each of us with the boots of peace, the breastplate of righteousness and the belt of truth, preparing us fully to walk into the battle secure and confident and ready to do battle with the spiritual forces of wickedness.