

Blessed Are The Balanced: The Shoes of Peace

Eph 6:15

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Isaiah 52:7-10 ~ Proverbs 1:20-33 ~ James 1:2-8 ~ John 16:17-33

Shoes have a long history of use in the journey of mankind. No one knows for sure when man first decided that protecting his feet had merit. We do know from archeology that sandals were the most common footwear in most early civilizations, however, a few early cultures had shoes. In Mesopotamia, (c. 1600–1200 BC) a type of soft shoes were worn by the mountain people who lived on the border of Iran. The soft shoe was made of wraparound leather, similar to a moccasin. "As late as 1850 most shoes were made on absolutely straight lasts, there being no difference between the right and the left shoe."

Most of us, for example, wouldn't think of wearing a shoe, except maybe sandals, without a heel on it. Yet, does anyone know why shoes or boots have heels on them at all? The history of heels comes from the problem that horse riders had of their foot slipping in the stirrups. Heels were placed on the boots to keep your foot in them. It became fashionable, as many shoe styles have evolved to, to have a heel on the shoe. It wasn't functional, but since when were a lot of the shoes we wear purchased for function?

Just look at the kids today in our culture. \$150.00 or more for a pair of sneakers. Certainly not purchased for function here. And ladies, some of your peers could use a good lesson in function as well. Why in the world would you wear a pair of shoes that hurt your feet in order to look fashionable? Of course this is a guys perspective who think that three pairs of shoes is way more than we'll ever need.

But the shoes that Paul is referring to here go way beyond keeping the bottom of our feet safe. It's about putting on the shoes of battle and Paul is referring to a spiritual battle, not a physical one. However, Paul is giving us the analogy of a Roman soldier's armor and Paul is not talking to just you individually, but to the church. We are to stand together in this battle, holding each other up when necessary and caring for each other's wounds when they come.

As we have been looking at this armor over the last several weeks, we are being reminded that Satan is the one waging war against us. I think that is why God wanted me to slow down and drift through this armor metaphor; to linger a little longer than we usually do when we read this passage of Scripture.

Each week I have reemphasized the need to stand firm in this fight, against the onslaught of Satan and his fiery arrows. The only way that we can do this, is not in our own strength, but in the strength of the Lord, by His power and by His might. But we also need to put on this armor

of God by faith, otherwise God would not have told Paul to instruct us to do so. One of the aspects of standing firm is to have the right protection and function of a covering for our feet. In order to stand firm, we must rely on verse 15 of chapter six. Paul implores us to: “... ***have your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.***” I’m going to talk about what the gospel of peace means in a little bit, so bear with me.

In Paul’s day Roman soldiers wore sandals that were primarily fixed to their feet by leather thongs. The difference between the Roman soldier’s sandals and the common man was that hobnails were attached to the soles of the sandal in order to give the soldier firm footing during battle and going up siege ramps, etc. This is the translation of Paul’s use of the Koininía Greek of his day that we are to be at readiness with the gospel of peace. The word “readiness” connotes preplanning, preparation, study, training, rehearsing, etc. It means a firm footing, a strong foundation in the gospel.

If any of you have been in the infantry and on the ground, you know, as every soldier knows that if he’s having trouble with his feet, he cannot stand nor can he march; and if he can’t stand, he cannot fight very well. Likewise, Christians need the firm foundation and firm footing that comes from standing on the gospel of peace in order to keep their balance in their fight with Satan.

What exactly is the gospel that Paul is referring to in this passage? What is this gospel of peace Paul is alluding to? Is it different than the gospel we know? Is it something that God is adding here? Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth, is addressing Christ’s resurrection where he says: **1 Cor 15: 1-5 - “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.”**

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and the salvation He offers us is the gospel of peace that we firmly stand on. Remember Jesus said that He had come to give us a peace that surpasses all understanding? Satan hates the gospel message because through it Christ has defeated him. So, Satan is constantly trying to turn people away from the Gospel and to preach some other gospel. Paul warned believers about this throughout his letters to the churches. He warned Christians, just like you, to beware of falling into the trap of a teaching or of believing some other message. He exhorted them, (verse 58 of chapter 15) - ***Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.***” When it comes to serving the Lord, we should always be on the move. We’re not to hunker down, but to go!

However, when it comes to the Gospel, we need to be unmovable and inflexible. There is only one truth. We need to stand firmly on the unchanging Gospel, for it needs no improvement. If the world pushes against you, trying to trap you by teaching some other message, will you be

able to hold your ground against it? Only if your knowledge of the Gospel has prepared you for the battle. Ye of little preparation are likely to fall. Biblical? Maybe Proverbs? No, Joe's proverb based on the Scriptures? No!! NO! NO!

Throughout his letters Paul emphasizes the importance of standing in the Gospel of the grace of God. In Romans 5:1,2 we learn that we "can" stand with God in peace because we have been justified by faith. ***"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."***

In writing to the church at Galatia, Paul exhorted them to, ***"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."*** Since we stand in the freedom of the Gospel, we should not allow Satan to again enslave us in the bondage of sinfulness.

Paul's strongest words about standing firmly on the only true Gospel are found in Galatians 1:6-9 – ***"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"*** We have only one Gospel and we must be extremely careful to preach it exactly as God gave it to us. For we will all be judged for what we teach.

Knowing the one true Gospel is paramount, for if you have a false gospel floating around in your mind, your beliefs about the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—the only Son of God—will be wrong. If you are wrong on the Gospel, you will not understand the work of Jesus Christ and why He died. Likewise, your views of the needs of mankind will be erroneous. Christ died for our sins. Man is a sinner and while we were yet sinners He came to save us. The world needs to know the Gospel, the good news that no one has to stay the way he is. Jesus has paid the price and has released the power that can transform lives. That is the Gospel.

As Christian soldiers, in an age old battle with the ***"...rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms,"*** we have our feet shod (an external covering for the human foot, but in this case, our spiritual feet), that comes from preparing ourselves by our understanding of the Gospel of peace. When you take your stand on the Gospel, God then gives us exactly what we need to defeat the enemy and to hold our ground. In other words, God gives our feet the strength to not give ground, not by our power, but by His. We read from Isaiah for our OT reading earlier, ***How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*** In Romans 10, Paul references this verse in verse 14 and 15: ***How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how***

can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Are you wearing the shoes of peace this day? Do you exhibit a readiness to share the Gospel with others? This is certainly one of the greatest, if not the greatest weapon we have against Satan, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, His Gospel of peace to those who are in Christ Jesus. God will give you the opportunity; it's your responsibility to be ready to be trained for the fight. The kind of soldier who will be victorious on the battlefield is the one who is stable and ready to stand, whose feet do not slip. The one who is victorious is the one who stands **balanced** and who has good mobility and uses every opportunity to engage the enemy by sharing the good news of the Gospel. If you have the shoes of peace strapped to your feet, you will be this kind of soldier for God.

Pastor Joe