

THE ARMOUR OF GOD – THE SHOES.

We are considering **Ephesians 6:10-18** – The Armour of God.

So far we have looked at –

- **The Belt of Truth** – This was the first item put on by the soldier. It was foundational. Other parts of the armour were secured by and attached to the belt. I suggested that it speaks primarily of the objective truth of the Scriptures as it applies to our lives.
- **The Breastplate of Righteousness** – we looked at the righteousness that God provides for us. Justification by faith allows for the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to my account. We also looked briefly at subjective, outworked righteousness. I spoke about the protection that walking in integrity of heart provides for us in the cosmic warfare that we face.

This week I want to look at the next item that Paul mentions.

Verse 15

“And having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.”

Paul was describing the equipment of the Roman soldier of his day.

What were these shoes and what advantage did they confer on those who wore them?

They wore a kind of sandal.

It wasn’t a boot or a shoe as we would be familiar with.

It was essentially a sole, with straps which wrapped firmly around his lower leg which held the sole securely in place.

It had hobnails or studs attached to the bottom of the sole acting like sprigs or cleats.

They provided the soldier with three major benefits –

1. Stability or traction.
2. Protection.
3. Mobility or flexibility.

1. Stability:

In a game of rugby a slip because of worn or absent sprigs might cost your side 7 points.

In hand to hand mortal combat it could cost you your life.

In hand to hand combat you must have a secure footing; you must have traction.

The word ‘**preparation**,’ in Greek carried two primary meanings.

The first denotes **firmness**.

N.E.B translates ‘**gives you a firm footing.**’

Paul has said that we must ‘stand’ in this struggle – you do that on your feet!

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It is **'the Gospel of Peace'** that makes this possible.

What is this 'Gospel of Peace?'

When most people think of God's peace, they think of being placid, calm or of a kind of personal centeredness.

This is the essence of Eastern thought and philosophy.

This kind of peace is the 'Summum Bonum' of most Eastern religions.

It isn't primarily what Paul is talking about in this passage.

The Bible does talk about the **'Peace of God that passes all understanding,'** which certainly has some parallels with what Eastern devotees are seeking for.

But the Bible talks about another more basic 'peace' that is prior to the subjective, personal 'peace of God' in our hearts and minds.

It talks about **'Peace with God.'**

The subjective, personal **'peace of God'** flows from the objective **'Peace with God.'**

You will never have one without the other.

One comes before two.

The Bible teaches that the 'natural man' [the man outside of God's redemptive grace] is at enmity with God.

Romans 8:7

"The carnal mind is at enmity with God."

Moffat has **'hostile,'** while Beck translates it **'hates God.'**

This is very strong language essentially saying that in our unsaved state we hate God; we are at war with Him.

I think many of us might object at this suggestion.

"I didn't hate God. I might have been indifferent, but I didn't hate Him."

"I know people who aren't Christians and they don't hate God."

I suspect that this hatred; this enmity runs deep and that many of us are quite unaware of its presence.

I think in many it is repressed.

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We deny it; we redirect it.

Perhaps it comes out as hatred towards parents, authority figures, those of another race or another gender.

Jonathan Edwards said,

“The anger we have towards God sleeps deep.”

We may be offended by the suggestion that we hate God but in truth many of us aren't particularly self-aware.

It reminds me of a passage in the Old Testament – it's found in **2 Kings 8**

Elisha the prophet encounters a Syrian by the name of Hazael.

Elisha stares at him so long that the Syrian becomes embarrassed.

Elisha begins to weep which compounds the awkwardness of the situation.

Hazael asks, “what is all this about?”

Elisha responds, “I see what you are going to do to my countrymen. You will burn their homes, kill their youths, smash their babies and rip open pregnant women.”

Hazael is outraged,

Verse 13

“Am I a mongrel dog that I would do such a horrible thing?”

The truth is he did all those things and more.

These things were in his heart – he just didn't recognize it.

He lacked self awareness.

We are like him.

“I don't hate God!”

Given the right [or wrong] circumstances, our animosity comes pouring out.

Perhaps it comes in the form of self pity, or depression; in suspicion, rage or in the form of accusations against God.

I remember a friend who wasn't saved; was a nice guy and you certainly wouldn't have said of him, 'he is really anti God,' who ran into difficult times.

His first question to me, who he knew to be a Christian, came in the form of an accusation.

“If God is good as you claim, how come he let this happen to me? Why do bad things happen to good people?”

His question had some hidden assumptions of course.

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“I’m good and I don’t deserve this.”

“God isn’t doing right by me.”

“He doesn’t give me what I deserve.”

This is very shaky ground to be standing on.

I don’t know about you, but quite frankly I’m not pushing God to give me what I deserve. On the contrary I’m trusting that he won’t give me what I deserve!

Perhaps a better question might be,

“How come so many good things happen to people who aren’t good?”

The bad times did allow an animosity to surface that had been well hidden to that point.

Among those who would say that they don’t hate God there are many who usually don’t have the God of the Bible in mind when they make that statement.

They aren’t angry with the image of God that they have created – essentially because this God is very much like them and likes and approves of the same things they do and dislikes the same things that they do.

It has been said that **‘God created us in His image and that we have returned the favour.’**

When these people are confronted with the God of the Bible – the Holy God who hates and judges sin; the God who speaks about hell and homosexuality in clear, unequivocal, unmistakable terms; the God who orders the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites; talk about this God and watch the sparks fly.

This God has the effrontery; the nerve, to challenge our idols.

He has the impudence; the audacity to step between us and our idols.

We respond like a mother bear when someone steps between her and her cubs.

This God is offensive. We hate this God. We are at war with this God.

The Gospel is the record of this God acting in Christ to end this enmity.

Romans 5:10

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

God is announcing to all who will accept it that Christ has done all that is needed to end the war.

We have peace with God.

Romans 5:1-2.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

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This peace gives us a place to stand.

It gives us security and stability.

It is this peace that provides the basis for all other kinds of peace.

Any peace not based on this peace will at best be only a temporary cessation of hostilities.

This 'peace with God' gives us a level place to stand when the enemy comes against us.

It gives us traction to withstand his accusations and intimidation.

2. **Protection.**

The Roman sandal was made of very stout material.

It needed to be.

A very familiar device in the warfare of this time was to put certain traps or gins into the ground surrounding your defensive position.

Sharp objects, often wood sharpened to a point, would be placed strategically in the ground so the points protruded slightly.

A soldier without strong footwear would come running along and his foot would be pierced by these sharp objects.

He would be immediately immobilized and be an easy target for another soldier's sword or for the archers placed on the walls or the rocks.

An enemy army would choose their defensive position carefully.

It was often in the midst of a rocky outcrop or on rocky ground.

This provided two immediate advantages.

1. Any cavalry were immediately taken out of the equation. **Amos 6:12** "Shall horses run upon the rock?" The expected answer is, "No." Horseshoes are a relatively new development historically. There was no regular use of horseshoes until the middle ages. Horses had no protection against the hard rocks and so became a liability instead of an advantage on such ground.
2. The rocky ground also made it very difficult for foot soldiers that didn't have appropriate footwear.

Our enemy is noted for his wiles.

He knows how to position himself on ground that is designed to immobilize us and render us vulnerable to his attacks.

It is the 'Gospel of Peace' that provides protection for our feet as we seek to extend God's Kingdom and walk out His purposes.

The enemy puts all sorts of sharp objects and obstacles in our path to detour us.

It might be in the form of difficult circumstances, difficult people, worries and concerns.

It could come in the form of accusations and condemnation.

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Convinced of our position in God's affections and secure in His purposes through the Gospel we can keep walking confidently.

We can tread these obstacles underfoot.

I'm not suggesting we walk with arrogance and presumption; some kind of 'triumphalism,' that brags, "I'm a King's Kid,' and nothing can touch me!"

We should walk confidently and boldly but also '**circumspectly**' [Ephesians 5:15].

The Gospel of Peace provides protection.

3. **Mobility.**

What are in view here are speed, flexibility, and lightness.

Mobility is a vital tactic of warfare – both modern and ancient.

Alexander the Great was one of the first generals to make use of this principle of warfare.

He developed the ability and tactic of moving his army quickly over long distances creating an element of surprise and reaped stunning rewards.

The Romans copied his tactics.

This kind of mobility and flexibility was entirely dependent on the soldiers having the appropriate footwear.

The Roman sandals were tough enough and light enough to allow this to happen.

I'd like to suggest that the 'Gospel of Peace' gives us a kind of 'flexibility; a spiritual nimbleness.'

One commentator on this passage likened it to a '**spiritual athleticism.**'

When people talk about brilliant athletes, one of the things they will often comment on is a quality of 'athleticism' that marks them out from their peers.

Think of **Michael Jordan** – the legendary Basketball player for the Chicago Bulls.

They nicknamed him '**Air Jordan,**' because he seemed to have this ability to defy gravity in a way that no one else could.

He would do a jump shot and he would 'hang up there' until everyone around him had landed back on the ground.

When he did a lay-up he seemed to move at a different speed to those who were seeking to defend against him.

They moved in slow motion while he seemed to be two moves ahead.

It gave the impression that they were left defending a shot he had faked two moves ago.

They were left waving at fresh air while he simply popped the ball in the basket from another unguarded position.

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The Gospel of Peace imparts to us a buoyancy of spirit; lightness; a joy that enables us to hang in there just a little longer than others.

It is a joy that comes from having an eternal perspective; a perspective that isn't bound by this world's 'gravitational pull.'

Paul spoke of his '**momentary light afflictions.**' [2 Corinthians 4:17]

His troubles and afflictions were substantial and included beatings, floggings, stoning, shipwreck and persecutions.

He wasn't weighed down by them.

His relationship with God through the Gospel had given him a perspective on these present troubles; a kind of 'spiritual athleticism' that enabled him to hang in there beyond what others would think was possible.

The weight of God's promised glory outweighed his present troubles.

The Gospel of Peace imparted a 'spiritual nimbleness' to his life; buoyancy, a joy that kept him in the midst of cosmic warfare.

Like all other items on this list, it is God's provision, but we must put it on.

It requires application.