

“The Shoes of the Gospel”

Ephesians 6:15

Introduction:

1. Some facts never change, even in a time of high tech warfare. Air and space power may be the deciding factors in modern military campaigns, but when all is said and done, the victors still have to hold the conquered territory with their infantry. Perhaps you can still remember the old children’s song, “I’m in the Lord’s Army,” which started, “I may never march in the infantry....” And even today the infantry must still to some degree get around on its feet, and that requires good shoes. Part of the legend of the battle of Gettysburg, which may or may not be true, is that at least part of the Confederate army went to the village because they were looking for shoes. And in the movie Gettysburg, there is the scene that shows Confederate soldiers marching barefoot, which was true.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not send us out to battle barefooted. The next part of the spiritual protection concerns having our feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. Let us consider together the importance of this part of the armor of God.

Exposition:

- I. The necessity to the soldier of having his feet protected.
 - A. The contrast between soldiers with and without proper coverings for their feet
 1. The weather
 2. The ground
 3. Other problems like exposure to insects and disease
 - B. The advantage that proper footwear gives—readiness

Illustration: When you put on a good pair of walking or running shoes, they put a “spring” into your steps. Do you know the feeling? Even a guy with bad knees can feel like he wants to run!

1. The shoes of the soldier “equipped him for long marches and a solid stance... They prevented his feet from sliding.” [Barth quoted by Stott]
2. The good news of peace with God produces assurance of God’s favor and a cheerful readiness for the Christian in the face of the darkest foe. Without this blessing, we would tend to stumble and slide in doubt and despair in the midst of spiritual conflict.

II. The need of the Christian for the readiness that the shoes of the gospel of peace provide
Illustration: Proper shoes must be formed out of the correct materials. Hiking shoes and dress shoes are not made out of the same materials and with the same design. Both must be made in conformity with their purposes. In the same way, God makes armor for the Christian out of materials suited for his purpose.

A. God's purpose is our holiness in order to **glorify** his name (Eph 1:3-6; Rm 8:29; Ti 2:11-14; 1 Th 4:3ff; 2 Tm 2:19; 1 Jn 3:3). Since that is so, let us think about the materials that are used to form "gospel shoes".

1. Religion based on human opinion assumes that peace is formed out of actions like ritual and morality and religious feelings. On various occasions, we have showed the error of the first two opinions, so let us think briefly about the last of these.

a. Some suppose that feelings of a flippant confidence or a happy light-heartedness are the same as boldness and joy. But the former spring from the events of religious "success", while the latter come through union with Jesus Christ.

Example: Think of the "Christian cool" saying of "praise the Lord anyhow!" or the irreverence that at times characterizes how people speak of the Lord. While God wants his people to see him sitting on a throne of **grace**, some would do well to remember that it is still a **throne!**

b. In reaction to "Christian cool", some promote solemnity and gloom and quietness, as if such emotions were holiness personified. A hollowed out sound of "let us worship the Lord" is supposed to be a mark of spiritual maturity, while it may only be a sign of those playing at holiness.

Apply: Proper religious emotions do not come from attempting to produce anything. Instead, they are the response of the soul to the truth of God and God's work in our lives: love, sorrow, joy, calmness, confidence, and etc. will all be present. That kind of response glorifies God.

2. Religion based on God's purpose of grace in Christ knows that God's peace comes from God's great love for his people and his zeal to uphold righteousness. And it knows that both of these find a happy meeting place in the cross.

a. Since this is so, the true worshipper knows that he or she has been "rooted and established in love" (Eph 3:17), and the hearts of people like that delight to trace their peace back to God's love for them in Christ. This glorifies God.

b. And also the true worshipper views the cross as the highest expression of God's holiness, because there the brightness of God's glorious holiness is most clearly seen. What was required to satisfy the righteousness of God? Only the substitutionary death of the spotless Lamb of God could pay our penalty and bring us peace (Rm 5:1,10).

c. When by faith we lay hold of the Father's gift of love in his Son, we will find that the Lord of peace will give us peace at all times and in every way (2 Th 3:16).
Apply: What is your experience of God's peace? Think of what this is saying to us! If we put on the shoes of the gospel of peace, we will have peace in the midst of conflict. This glorifies God.

B. God's order in putting our shoes together is important to attain his end.

Illustration: If you have ever had a part in manufacturing or building anything, you know that order is important. One summer I had a job as a "placer" in a factory that made electric motors. The wires in the armature had to be placed on the com in a certain order. If the right order was not followed, the motor would not operate.

1. True holy and godly living is **impossible** without the basis of the peace of the gospel for a couple reasons. First of all, godliness consists of a loving approach to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How can you love God if you are at war with him? Second, unless you know that God accepts you by **grace**, you will always be trying to **earn** your way into his favor. Third, the Spirit of holiness does not live in the hearts of the unforgiven, and only he has the power to produce holiness and godliness in us.

2. "The divine order then is first pardon, then holiness; first peace with God, and then conformity to the image of that God with whom we have been brought to peace... Reconciliation is indispensable to resemblance; personal friendship must begin a holy life."
[Bonar, *God's Way of Holiness*, p. 34]

3. Peace with God is the immediate possession of the believer at the time of salvation. It is not the fruit of a long course of successful spiritual warfare, but a direct blessing of saving grace. Anything else turns the gift of God into a work.

4. It is this peace that must rule in our hearts and in this church (Col 3:15). We will make progress in spiritual conflict as a body when we together put to death the acts of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21), and when we experience the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) in our fellowship. May we fully know this blessing of peace!