

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
SPIRITUAL WARFARE
PART 2

This morning in our Foundation of Faith series we are in part 2 of our study on spiritual warfare. Now let me say this. As the day of the Lord's return for His Bride, the Church, gets closer, the assault of Satan against believers is going to grow. As I said last week, he can't take away our salvation, but he can destroy our witness to others of Jesus.

Remember what Paul said in Colossians 1:13-14, "**He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.**" In other words, we have switched teams. We were on, in a sense, "Team Satan" and then once we got saved we were traded to "Team Jesus." And understand it is not because you were so good that Jesus needed you. But He is so gracious and so merciful He chose you!

Now you may not see that as a big deal but it truly is. It is not just being on the side of Jesus, being on Team Jesus! You see, now the rest of the world, the unsaved world controlled by the invisible or spiritual realm is at war with us! That is what Paul said in Ephesians 6:12, "**For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**" There is a war that we are in the middle of and many Christians don't even care. They fight against the symptoms instead of the disease you might say!

What do I mean by that? I mean that we fight these battles in the flesh as we fight with our spouses, our children, our boss, our co-workers, our family, our friends and-so-on. As we give into all kinds of different temptations. And we miss the point that there is a battle going on and we try to deal with it in the flesh and that will never work. These are the symptoms of the warfare that is going on and we need to use our spiritual weapons that God has given to us to fight these battles.

The world or world system that is hostile to God encourages believers to live a life that is focused on personal gratification or the putting yourself above everyone else. The flesh rages war and this is speaking of the flesh nature that is opposed to the will of God and even in Christians it tries to resurrect itself by getting us to focus on gratifying our sensual desires. And of course there is the Devil, the adversary, the slanderer who uses his demonic forces to destroy people's lives!

Believe it or not, accept it or not, every day of our lives we as believers are locked in this invisible battle with the forces of darkness, the forces of wickedness in the spirit realm. And the most comprehensive passage in the New Testament concerning spiritual warfare is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. And as we saw last week as we covered Ephesians 6:10-13, Paul is commanding us to take up the whole armor of God, to be prepared. There will be down time and there will be times when the battle heats up. We need to be ready at all times and the only way to do that is to be prepared. Let me show you what I mean with this story. We are told,

Recently *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC* ran an article about the Alaskan Bull Moose. The males of the species battle for dominance during the fall breeding season, literally going head-to-head with antlers crunching together as they collide. Often the antlers, their only weapon are broken. That ensures defeat. The heftiest moose, with the largest and strongest antlers, triumphs.

Therefore, the battle fought in the fall is really won during the summer, when the moose eat continually. The one that consumes the best diet for growing antlers and gaining weight will be the heavyweight in the fight. Those that eat inadequately sport weaker antlers and less bulk.

There is a lesson here for us. Spiritual battles await. Satan will choose a season to attack. Will we be victorious, or will we fall? Much depends on what we do now - before the wars begin. The bull-moose principle: Enduring faith, strength, and wisdom for trials are best developed before they're needed.

- Craig Brian Larson

That is why we are taking our time going through this section in Ephesians chapter 6 on spiritual warfare because we need to know what our weapons are, we need to know how to use them, we need to know who we are fighting and-so-on. And Paul's point is that we need to be ready for the schemes, the wiles of the Devil because he has many and he truly knows how to use them. Why is Paul giving us these warnings? So we don't fall prey to them, that we are aware of them. That we know how to fight against them. Paul said in Ephesians 6:13, "**Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**"

As we have seen and yet we need to remember, our battle is not against flesh and blood but it is a spiritual battle. Yes, it is played out through the flesh because Satan and his forces use man as he tools but it is truly a spiritual battle. In fact, Paul lists the rankings of these demonic forces, Satan being in charge, followed by principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual hosts of wickedness. The Scriptures don't elaborate much more on these and we really don't need to know more about them, what we need to know is our armor, how to protect ourselves, and that is what Paul is going to give to us.

We need to stand strong in these battles and Paul makes that point very clear as he tells us that as Christians we are to “**withstand**” or ANTHISTEMI (anth-is’-tay-mee) in the Greek, and it speaks of taking a stand against a great opposition. How many battles have been lost because soldiers did not take the battle seriously? The “**evil day**” is not a specific day but a period of time when the enemies of God will grow stronger and more evil and the conflict will be intense, as we are seeing today! Thus, Paul will give to us the armor we need to stand against any attacks of the enemy and, of course, our victory is in Christ!

Let’s read through the armor that God has for us and then we will begin to examine these battle implements. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:14-18, “**Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.**”

Now keep in mind that the first three pieces of armor are permanent, they are never to be taken off. We are never to be without the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness or having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Paul uses the word “**having**” which is in the Greek aorist tense, which speaks of never being without them!

Now what I want you to notice is that in these first 5 verses, Ephesians 6:10-14 we see the word “**stand**” or “**withstand**” used some four times. Why does Paul repeat himself so much here? Because he does not want you to fall prey to the schemes of the Devil, he wants you to stand strong and thus, you need to put on your armor! So let’s begin looking at this armor and we will spend a few weeks on this because I believe it is that important.

1. THE BELT OF TRUTH – EPHESIANS 6:14

Now keep in mind that Ephesians is one of the prison epistles or the letter’s that Paul wrote while in prison in Rome for his faith. He also wrote Philippians, Colossians and Philemon during this time. And thus, he was chained to at least one Roman soldier and they would change shifts throughout the day and night so that Paul always had a guard chained to him.

I believe it is out of this that Paul gets the idea to write about the spiritual armor we as Christians have. He saw what the Roman soldiers were wearing and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he applied that to our lives and the battles we are in.

We need to also keep in mind that in Paul’s day the men wore long garments and they were fine for walking in leisure, but if you went on a long journey, if you were engaged in conflict, it would be hard to move. Ladies, you know how it is, you really can’t run or fight in a long dress, there really is no good way. Thus, in those days you would gird or draw up your garment and tuck it into your belt, that is how you girded your loins.

And so a soldier's belt was important, not only so that he could gird up his loins but the rest of the armor was somehow hooked onto that belt, and for us, it is the belt of truth! And thus, this belt that is girded and demonstrates the believer's readiness for war is – ***TRUTH!***

What does that mean, the belt of truth? I think you can look at this two different ways and both apply as you will see. The Greek word for "**truth**" is ALETHEIA, (al-ay-thi-a) and it carries with it the idea of that which is true.

Jesus said in John 17:17, "**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**" That is where we need to start, God's Word is truth. Why is that so important to us? Because if you do not believe God's Word is truth, if you begin to compromise with God's Word then you are opening the door to be tripped up by the Devil and his lies. You have not girded yourself with the truth, the truth of God's Word!

Why is this so important to us? Let me give you just a few reasons and you will clearly see why we need the truths of God's Word. Paul said in Ephesians 4:14, "**that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.**"

Without the truth of God that is found in the Word of God you are going to be blown this way and that way by the winds of false doctrine that blow through the church. And if you doubt that then you are a fool. Sorry but that is just the way it is. You do not know better than God!

In I Timothy 4:1 Paul warns Timothy, **“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.”** These false doctrines, these doctrines of demons are going to deceive some away from the faith, how can that be? Because they have moved away from the truth and bought into the lies of Satan! Thus, these false schemes of Satan can be successfully encountered only with the truth of the Word of God.

If you doubt that then you need to listen to some of our Prophecy Update studies because they will show you that churches, denominations, leaders who move away from the Word of God are proclaiming doctrines of demons and the people in their congregations are being blown away by the winds of false doctrine that are blowing through their church! Let me just share a few with you to show you what I mean and if you need more you can see me afterward and I can point you to our web page and you can check it out further.

Now keep in mind that when you move away from the Word of God you open the door to all kinds of things. For instance, several years ago now, Chuck Smith Jr. put it this way,

“What would happen if we allowed people to ‘feel’ what we cannot explain, to know with the heart and not with the brain? We would open the door of faith to a wider audience than if we continued to insist on a rational belief in the facts as the only legitimate starting point of the Christian faith.” It sounds good but think about it. If we were to do that then how would we know what is right and what is wrong? We wouldn’t and that is what they want!

Now, listen to what Rick Warren said about all this. He tells us in regards to the growth of the Emergent Church:

In the past twenty years, spiritual seekers have changed a lot. In the first place, there are a whole lot more of them. There are seekers everywhere. I've never seen more people so hungry to discover and develop the spiritual dimension of their lives. That is why there is such a big interest in Eastern thought, New Age practices, mysticism and the transcendent.

He further explains what the "Emerging Church" must do in order to emerge:

Today seekers are hungry for symbols and metaphors and experiences and stories that reveal the greatness of God. Because seekers are constantly changing, we must be sensitive to them like Jesus was; we must be willing to meet them on their own turf and speak to them in ways they understand.

- Rick Warren

You see, people are not hungry for God's Word because God's Word convicts them of sin and thus, they don't want to bother with that. Thus, you have Yoga in the church, you have couple's living together in sin but they don't see it that way because in God's eyes they are married. Sorry, you are living in fornication. We have plays, skits, we have basketball, we have Starbucks coffee for the people, sorry we have Folgers here! And the thing that is missing is the Word of God. We see homosexuality accepted in the church as a normal, not sinful lifestyle. We have laughing in the Spirit, barking like dogs, and all other kinds of strange behavior attributed to the Holy Spirit but not found in the Word of God. We have so-called Christian leaders telling us that the God of the Bible is the same God that Muslim's worship. They tell us that we don't need the shed blood of Christ. They tell us that Jesus is not the only way. And I can go on but I better stop!

The end result of all of this is that Christians are sinning just as much as the unsaved are! Do you realize that the divorce rate in the church is the same for those that don't know the Lord? That has never been before but now, because we have moved away from God's Word, we reject what God has said, we are just like the world and not like the Lord! And make no mistake about it, God held the children of Israel accountable for their sin and as Peter said in I Peter 4:17, **“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”**

So if a church is to stay healthy, if a Christian is going to be prepared for warfare, he has to know what the truth is and our truth is found in the Word of God because it is truth, we can trust it. Imagine being a soldier and the battle plans you have, the maps that you have were not totally correct. Yes, some of it was and some of it wasn't but you did not know what was true or what was false. You would be in serious trouble and that is so true in our own lives. We have a guide book and it is the Word of God. The world does get it right at times, but look at how often they get it wrong. Why seek that which is not always true when you have God's Word which is ***TRUTH!***

Now the second point that I believe Paul is making is not only that the Word of God is our source of truth but that we are to be truthful, it is speaking of an attitude of truthfulness. You see, the word "**gird**" was a common expression that was used to put ones self in readiness, prepared for anything that might come their way, any service that might be required.

If we are living in truth the Devil can't trip us up. And keep in mind that the belt helps hold the other pieces of armor in place, so truth is the integrating force in the life of a victorious Christian. It is not something that you turn on and off, use when you want but truth should always flow from your life.

John tells us, **“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”** III John 2-4. You see, to walk in the truth means to walk consistent with the truths of God, to live what you say you believe! You need to speak the truth, live the truth, don't go down the path of lies because the Devil is the father of lies, it is his natural language!

Back in Genesis chapter 3 do you know what the first attack that Satan used against man was? It was deception! He deceived Eve, distorted the Word of God, twisted the Word of God, he got Eve to doubt the Word of God! So she was deceived by the lies of Satan and rejected the truths of God! And he has not changed his tactics; he doesn't have to because people continue to fall prey to them because they listen to him!

So this first piece of armor, the belt of truth is a defensive weapon that is used to fight off deception! You see, Satan deals with confusion, deception, lies, that is how he speaks. But, if you put the truth in front of him he is gone and his lies fall apart, they are shown for what they are. Don't fall prey to them; don't get caught up in them!

Now you may not see this as a big deal, speaking the truth, just speaking some fibs, some white lies, whatever they are, but they are the hook that Satan will use to catch you. Let me explain with this true story to show you the deception and how we must put on the belt of truth and never take it off! We are told,

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Sitting across from me was a man whose story I would have doubted except that I knew the facts firsthand. We were talking about a crisis in his life: his marriage had fallen apart, he was involved in an illicit relationship, and his children had rejected him. And he was desperately depressed.

By themselves, none of those things took me by surprise. I've counseled scores of men with those exact symptoms. But their stories were far different than his. In most cases they were either non-Christians or nominal Christians who were not walking with God. Their lack of committed discipleship resulted in some very poor and unbiblical choices that caused them great pain.

But this man's story was quite different. He had a godly family and a godly heritage. He was a man of the Scriptures who had taught Sunday school for years. He was a pillar in the church, having served on several boards. He was the kind of man whom everyone aspired to become.

So what happened? What could possibly bring down a man with biblical convictions, a loving wife, and a successful family and business? How could someone fall from such a blessed life to land in the depths of despair?

The answer is sobering. In his own words, he told me: "I had it all – a beautiful wife and family, stature in the community, a significant role in the church, a thriving business, a chalet in the mountains, a condo on the beach, and all the toys you could ever image. I thought I was bulletproof. I thought God's hand was on me forever and that everything I touched would turn to Gold. But I was wrong."

As he shared his story, he began to recount a tale of compromises in the smallest of issues: not dealing with a spat with his wife, taking that second look at a beautiful woman, telling small lies that led to bigger ones. “They all seemed so innocent and inconsequential at the time,” he said. “But in a few years, they developed new patterns in my life. The lustful looks turned into a sexual addiction and then infidelity. The little lies became lapses of integrity that undermined all my relationships and destroyed my business. In very little time, I was living the opposite life of what I once had. In word, I was deceived. Yet no matter how many people warned me, I couldn’t see it. I was deceived into believing that money, sex, power, pleasure, and ego gratification were all part of the good life that I deserved and God wanted for me. I read my Bible and went to church, the truth ever before me. And I still couldn’t see it. Now I’m alone, depressed, remorseful, and wishing like crazy I could do it all over. But I can’t.

That isn’t an uncommon deception. If we really want to learn the key to happiness – and honestly, who doesn’t? – we are constantly told where we can find it. The incredible secret to realizing the meaning and joy of life is right in front of us. All we have to do is turn on the TV and watch the commercials.

Isn’t that what they promise? If you want that beautiful blonde to jump into your car, you have to have the right kind of car. If you want to enjoy life to the fullest, you have to drink the right kind of beer. If you want to be confident, influential person, you need to dye your hair this way and treat your skin that way. Nearly every advertisement gives us a glimpse into somebody’s idea of what happiness is all about.

Or better yet, check out the reality shows. First we enjoyed watching houses get a makeover. Then we thought it would be interesting if people traded places and redecorated other people's houses. Then it went to trading parents and then to trading spouses. Now we can see people actually trade bodies. Shows open with someone looking one way and close with that person looking some other way – often just like a celebrity of his or her choosing.

What's behind this obsessive drive to get more, look better, and be different? What was behind the tragic fall of the man with the almost-perfect life? Lies – a subtle yet effective system of deep, dark deception.

- Chip Ingram, *The Invisible War*, pp. 59-60

That should be a wake-up call to each and every one of us! You see, if you don't want to trip up, if you don't want to stumble and fall, then immerse yourself in the Word of God and let truth be flowing from your life. If you are not truthful, then you will be tripped up by your lies. If you don't believe there is absolute truth found in the Word of God, you will be tripped up by the lies of Satan. The belt of truth must be put on and kept on or you will be in trouble!

I believe that being girded with truth primarily has to do with the self-discipline of total commitment. It is the committed Christian, just as it is the committed soldier and the committed athlete, who is prepared. Winning in war and in sports is often said to be the direct result of desire that leads to careful preparation and maximum effort. It is the army or the team who wants most to win who is most likely to do so - even against great odds. To be content with mediocrity, lethargy, indifference, and half-heartedness is to fail to be armored with the belt of God's truth and you leave yourself exposed to Satan's schemes. Thus, put on ***THE BELT OF TRUTH!***

2. THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS – EPHESIANS 6:14

The second piece of a soldier's armor is his breastplate and once again this piece of armor, the breastplate of righteousness is to be put on and never to be taken off. The breastplate covered the full torso of the soldier, from his neck to just below his waist. It protected the vital organs. This piece of armor was sleeveless and made of leather or heavy linen. To reinforce it and to provide protection, pieces of animal hooves were cut into slices and sewn into place as they were overlapped. Sometimes they used horns or pieces of metal and some were made of all metal that was molded and hammered to conform to the individual's body. It covered the midsection and then some, from just below the neck to the thighs. It guarded all the vital organs that keep us alive, and thus, it was important to put on, to wear, to cloth yourself in a sense with the breastplate! Without this the soldier could receive a deadly blow. So a soldier would never go into battle without his breastplate!

What is Paul telling us when he calls for us to put on the breastplate of righteousness? First of all Paul is not speaking of self-righteousness, which is not righteousness at all. In fact, that kind of righteousness is one of the worst kinds of sin! You see, this person is wrapped in his own righteousness, which the Bible says is like filthy rags and yet he feels that his accomplishments please God. He feels that they will not only please God but he will be rewarded for his accomplishments! For the believer who believes in this self-righteousness, it will keep him from the power of God, the fellowship that God desires to have with him. For the unbeliever, this self-righteousness will keep him from the kingdom of God!

Then what is this righteousness that Paul is speaking of here? Is he speaking of the imputed righteousness of Christ into our lives that comes by faith? We do see that spoken of in Philippians 3:9 where Paul says, **“and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”** This is the righteousness that has been imputed to us or given to us by Christ. Thus, when the Father looks at us He sees us as righteous, as perfect. It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

I once again don't believe that this is what Paul is speaking of here, this perfect righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith that every Christian receives. Why do I say that? Because we can't put on something that God has already given to us and He has given us the righteousness of Christ in our lives. We don't do something for it; it is given to us by faith! You see, we are permanently dressed in that righteousness throughout our lives and throughout eternity! So it can't be the righteousness of Christ that God has given to us by faith!

Then what in the world is Paul speaking of when he talks about the breastplate of righteousness? Keep in mind that Paul is dealing with our Christian walk, and thus, we must stand in righteousness, do the right thing. He is speaking of the practical righteousness of daily living. By living lives that are filled with unrighteousness, by having your Christian character flawed by immoral behavior, you are leaving a gaping hole in your breastplate. It is really just conforming our will to God's will, and yes, I just said "just" but that truly is an area that we struggle with but we do need to do it, surrender and conform to His will!

Paul put it this way in Romans 6:11-14, "**Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments [weapons] of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**"

You see, the way we live can be a spiritual weapon against the enemy or we can let it cause our weapons, our armor to be dysfunctional. John said, **“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.”** I John 2:28-29.

So Paul is speaking of practical, everyday righteousness or what we might call holy living! Paul put it like this in Philippians 3:12-14, **“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

Now here is the key to all this. Yes, the imputed righteousness of Christ is given to every believer and it is the key to practical righteousness or how we live out our faith. One is given to us by faith – imputed righteousness. The other is one we must walk in – practical righteousness. You see, it does matter what we think, what we say, how we act. God wants us to be holy as He is holy! And for Paul, he knew he had a ways to go but he did not give up. He pressed on; he was focused on the Lord.

Yes he blew it, he made mistakes but that did not hold him back, he reached forward and that is important for each of us to do as we walk the Christian walk! Thus, to put on the breastplate of righteousness is to live in obedience to God on a daily basis, moment by moment. God's armor is holy living, at least part of His armor for us! And God sets the standard and He gives us the power to walk in a manner that is worthy of the high calling by which we have been called, and then it is up to us to be willing to take those steps of faith, to live holy lives! He gives to us, He places upon our lives the imputed righteousness of Christ and we must put on the practical righteousness of daily living!

And think of the times your heart was broken over what you did. Think about how your heart ached when you walked in unholiness before God. You had holes in the breastplate and the Devil took advantage of that and got right to your heart! He will rob you of that joy, that peace, that contentment all because you did not put on the breastplate of righteousness, you did not walk in holiness before God!

And please do not take this lightly. If you don't put on the breastplate, if you are not walking in holiness before God you will open yourself up to attacks by the enemy, by the Devil! Disobedience is an open door to the Devil and I don't care what you think, if what you are doing, if what you are saying is contrary to the Word of God, guess who is wrong? It is not God!

If you are not wearing the breastplate of righteousness then your heart is being condemned by the enemy and your mind is being deceived! If you are working hard to please God by your actions, you won't be able to. You are acting like a religious person who is trying to reach up to God. "Then what are you saying Pastor Joe? What am I to do?" You are to walk in holiness!

Think about this, when you are walking do you think, "Right leg, left leg, right leg, left leg, left leg – oops!" Of course you don't and if you do, we need to talk. It is just natural, you know what to do and your mind has been trained in what to do and you just do it, you walk!

I think the same is true in the Christian life. We are trained in the things of God, we know the Word of God, it has filled our hearts and minds. Thus, as we walk through this life it is not something we should have to think about, "I wonder if that is wrong?" It should be obvious to us and thus, we don't walk down that path. Walking should be natural for us but it is not something we do alone. The Holy Spirit is right there showing us in accordance with the Word of God what to do and where to go! God will give us the power to live holy lives but we must be willing to surrender to Him and walk accordingly!

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 6:7, "**by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.**" Paul is speaking of the key to living a life of service unto the Lord. And he tells us that the key is being empowered by the Holy Spirit! You must utilize the resources that are at your disposal as Paul did!

Paul just finished speaking of all that he went through in the Christian life. He shows us that yes, he had trials, he had tribulation but he had the fruit of the Spirit flowing from his life as he surrendered his will to the will of God, which empowered him for the work that God had called him to do.

Why do we think that the work that God started in our lives by the Spirit can now be accomplished by the power of our flesh? Folks, it can't! It is as we are told in Zechariah 4:6, "**. . . 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts.**" May we not forget that no matter what we are going through!

Not only does God's Spirit strengthen us, but so does God's Word as we trust in the promises of God. As Joshua was preparing to lead the children of Israel into the Promise Land the Lord told Joshua, "**Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.**"
Joshua 1:7-9.

And here in II Corinthians Paul not only speaks of the “**word of truth**” but also “**the armor of righteousness on the right and on the left.**” What does that mean? The soldier would carry his sword on the right hand and it speaks of the Word of God being our offensive weapon against the enemy. Also, the shield was carried in the left hand and it is our defensive weapon, the shield of faith, to quench the fiery darts that the enemy will shoot at us!

Thus, to stand strong you must be empowered by the Spirit of God and you must use the spiritual weapons that God has given to you to win this battle, to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost. You must put on the ***BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!***

3. SANDALS OF PEACE – EPHESIANS 6:15

The last one we will be looking at this morning is that we are to have our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace or we are to be wearing the sandals of peace. I remember back in the late 1970’s when I was in High School. I was a track man and ran the sprints as well as cross country, at least that is what they called distant running back then.

And shoes were very important as you can well imagine. Now today you don’t know how fortunate you are. We did not have Footlocker or any of these stores to go to and buy the shoes we needed. And thus, there was a very ingenious or clever man who attached a trailer to his car and drove from High School to High School selling shoes for the different sports.

For me, the main shoe was the Adidas Gazelle; it was a blue shoe and probably weighed a ton compared to today's running shoes! Believe it or not they still sell this shoe! It really does not look as cool as it did back then! Now the reason running shoes and spikes were so important in track is that you needed to get a good firm footing so you would not slip. Once you fell that was it, the race was over for you. So you needed that traction, you needed that stability so you could move forward in the race!

Now look at today and see how things have changed so much. We have shoes for every conceivable type of activity. We have dress shoes, work shoes, leisure shoes. In athletics there are special shoes for every sport, sometimes several types for a given sport. A tennis player might wear one type of shoe on a concrete court, another kind on clay, and still another on grass. Likewise, football and baseball players wear different shoes to play on different surfaces. They even have stores where you can buy these shoes now; you don't have to buy it out of some guy's car!

Now as you can imagine, a soldier's shoes are even more important because if they lose their footing it could be a matter of life and death, not just losing the race. As you can clearly see, for the soldier the shoes or sandals he would wear could save his life. Thus, the Roman soldier would have his shoes or sandals impregnated with nails or bits of metal to get a firm grip, so he would not lose his footing. They would be able to stand against the enemy. They were strapped on to his leg so they would not come off, that too was important. You did not want to lose your shoe!

Not only that but they had to be comfortable in the sense if the soldier's feet would become blistered, cut, even swollen he would not be able to stand, he would be in too much pain.

A Christian's spiritual footwear is equally important in his warfare against the schemes of the devil. If he has carefully girded his loins with truth and put on the breastplate of righteousness, but does not properly shod his feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, he is destined to stumble, fall, and suffer many defeats.

For us as Christians, Paul is saying that we are to literally wrap our feet with the Gospel of peace. The word that Paul uses for "**preparation**" is the Greek word HETOIMASIA, (het-oy-mas-ee'-ah) and it speaks of a "prepared foundation." It speaks of a readiness, stability, surefootedness!

You see, the Gospel message gives us stability; surefootedness because it is built upon the Rock, Jesus Christ and that fact can't be shaken. No matter what the enemy throws at you, your footing is secure in Christ. A good pair of boots allows the soldier to be ready to march, climb, fight, or do whatever else is necessary. Christ demands the same readiness of His people.

And what Paul is speaking of here in regards to the Gospel of peace is the good news that Christ has given to us. That we are reconciled back to God through Jesus and thus, we are at peace with God. Paul tells us that in Romans 5:6-10, **“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”**

Now here’s the thing. No matter what a person who has rejected Jesus Christ says, if there are any of you hear this morning or you are listening on the radio or Internet, you are not at peace with God but you are at war with Him!

Now before you get mad at me it is not what I have said but it is what God has said. Paul, in Romans 8:6-8 tells us, **“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”**

Thus, we as Christians have this good news, the Gospel message to bring to the lost, the unsaved so that they might have peace with God and enjoy the peace of God in their lives as Paul said in Romans 5:1-2, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”** People are looking for peace in their lives but they will never find true peace apart from Jesus Christ.

Now what does this mean to us as Christians? If our feet are not placed in the Gospel of peace, if we don't know what we believe, we will never be able to stand strong, have a sure footing when we share our faith. That should just make sense. You should know why you believe what you believe and if you don't talk with me or one of the elders. We can help you by sharing with you the Scriptures!

You see, it is the Scriptures that help us to stand firm because the Scriptures share with us the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ! You can have peace in the midst of warfare. You can have confidence in the battles you face. You can be immovable in the conflict because your feet are shed in the preparation of the Gospel of peace!

As you share the Gospel you will find out that the foundation of your faith is strong, it is clear, and it is easy to defend. There is no room for doubt, no room for your feet to start slipping because you have on – ***THE SANDALS OF PEACE!***

As I close this morning I want you to remember that these three pieces of armor are to be placed on and they are to stay on. You are never to take them off! You are to gird your loins with truth – live a life that is truthful and you will not be tripped up by the Devil! You are to put on the breastplate of righteousness and live a life that is holy before the Lord so that you won't have holes in your breastplate where the enemy can cause you to be emotionally unstable. And lastly, have your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, have a sure footing in what you believe and then share that good news with others for as Paul said, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”** Romans 1:16.

Let me leave you with this to think about. We are told,

Clarence Hall, a World War II correspondent, gave this remarkable testimony:

I can never think of the boons [help] and benefits that the Bible invariably brings without thinking of Shimmabuke, a tiny village I came upon as a war correspondent in Okinawa.

Thirty years before, an American missionary en route to Japan had stopped there just long enough to make two converts – Shosei Kina and his brother Mojon. He left a Bible with them and passed on. For thirty years they had no contact with any other Christian missionary, but they made the Bible come alive! They taught the other villagers until every man, woman, and child in Shimmabuke became a Christian.

Shosei Kina became the headman of the village, and Mojon the chief teacher. In the school the Bible was read daily. The precepts of the Bible were law in the village. In those thirty years there developed a Christian democracy in its purest form.

When the American army came across the island, an advance patrol swept up to the village compound with guns leveled. The two old men stepped forth, bowed low, and began to speak. An interpreter explained that the old men were welcoming the Americans as fellow Christians!

The flabbergasted GIs sent for their chaplain. He came with officers of the Intelligence Service. They toured the village. They were astounded at the spotlessly clean homes and streets and the gentility of the inhabitants. The other Okinawan villages they had seen were filthy, and the people were ignorant and poverty-stricken.

Later I strolled through Shimmabuke with a tough army sergeant. He said, “I can’t figure it out – this kind of people coming from a Bible and a couple of old guys who wanted to be like Jesus Christ. Maybe we have been using the wrong kind of weapons to make the world over!

- Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, p. 278, #857

What a lesson for us to learn. Our weapons are not carnal but they are mighty in the Lord, they are spiritual weapons and the Holy Spirit, through Paul has admonished us, commanded us to put on the full armor of God! May we listen and obey – the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, sandals of peace!