

The Whole Armour of God (4) The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

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- [0 : 00] Let us join together in the worship of God, and we shall sing to his praise from Psalm 51.
- Psalm 51, reading from verse 4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned. In thy sight done this ill, that when thou speaks thou mayst be just and clear in judging still.
- Behold, I in iniquity was formed, the womb within. My mother also me conceived in guiltiness and sin. Behold thou in the inward parts, with truth delighted art, and wisdom thou shalt make me know within the hidden part.
- Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so. A wash thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow.
- Of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the voice, that so these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. All mine iniquities blot out, thy face hide from my sin.
- [1 : 21] Create a clean heart, Lord renew, a right spirit me within. And so on, we shall sing these verses. Verse 4 to 10 of Psalm 51.
- Against thee, thee only, have I sinned. In thy sight done this ill. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.
- When thy sight done this ill. And when thy spirit is a misty just, and clear in judging still.
- Behold, I am in heaven. In which it was formed, the womb when.
- My mother was born, the womb when. My mother was born, the womb when. My mother was born, the womb when. And guilt is not sinned.
- [2 : 45] Behold, thou with thee, ever part, with the delighted heart.
- And rest the large, the king in all. Within the hidden power.
- To thou withest offspring, help me. I shall be cleansed, oh.
- Yea, watch thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow.
- Of gladness and of joyfulness. Make me to hear the voice.
- [4 : 06] That soul is ready, who's which thou hast broken.
- We rejoice. For my heaven will be brought out.
- Thy face I from myself. Create a clean heart for renew.
- And I shall be with thee.
- Let us join together in prayer. Let us pray. O Lord our God, we give thanks that your word reminds us of the provision that you have made to sinners such as we are.
- [5 : 17] That enables us to believe that though our sins are many and they are of the darkest hue.
- That we can believe that on the basis of what your own word teaches. That there is a remedy for our sin.

That there is a remedy for our sin in the passion of Jesus Christ. That he has offered himself as a ransom for many.

As a sacrifice for sin. And so it is that though our sins be as scarlet. That they shall be made whiter than the snow.

Even the crimson they shall be whiter than wool. We give thanks Lord that your people have discovered this for themselves.

[6 : 26] And that this is what encourages them. When they are again and again confronted by their own sinful actions. The sinfulness of their hearts and minds.

The sinfulness of their inclinations even. No matter how often you deal with them. As a father deals with his children.

And apply the rod of correction. We still fall prey to the leanings and the inclinations of our desperately wicked heart.

We give thanks Lord that the Lord, the God that you are, is greater than our heart. We pray that you would bless us this day as we worship.

As we come with emptiness. We are thankful that we come to fullness. As we come crying out of penury and poverty.

[7 : 34] We give thanks that you are the God who is rich beyond measure. That the cattle upon a thousand hills.

That they are yours. We bless you and thank you that. As we read in the scriptures of the Old Testament. When Joseph went into Egypt before his brethren.

And was able by virtue of your own provision. To fill the storehouses of Egypt in preparation for the dearth that came upon the land.

And when the famine drove them into Egypt to seek bread for their household. There they found a brother born for adversity.

Who was able to supply them out of that fullness. And so it is with the provision that you have made for us in the person of Christ.

[8 : 44] When we cry out of want. And if we cry to yourself. You direct us to the storehouses that are always full.

And we pray that we would know the wisdom to do so. At all times. Regardless of what our situation may be.

We are once again reminded of our frailty. And our weakness. As creatures of the dust. As we continue under the dark shadow of a pandemic.

And we find ourselves as a community. Forced into a lockdown once again. We are indebted to you for your long suffering and patience with regard to each of us.

That we have not as of yet yielded to the effects to the extent that others have. But we are no better than thee.

[9 : 53] And no more worthy of the least of your mysteries. And although we enter into a new phase of this experience as a community.

We pray that you would keep us in it. And that our eye would be upon you. And that whatever else we do. Unlike those who govern us.

And those who are responsible for leading us through this thing. That we would have an eye to your glory. And that we would come to you before any. And put our trust in the ability that you have to deliver us.

Out of this terrible evil that has befallen us. We give thanks that we can direct others to yourself.

Just as surely as we can come to yourselves. And all of us who have the ability to speak to others regarding the welfare of our soul.

[11 : 00] We can stand in the gate of the Lord's house. And proclaim as your servant did before us his word. And to say to them hear the word of the Lord.

And enter in to worship the Lord. Asking all and entreating all to amend their ways.

And to direct their feet into the path of obedience once again. O Lord our God we acknowledge that.

That except we pay heed and repent of our sins. We will answer for them each one. We give thanks for the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The alone saviour of sinners. We pray that we would be mindful of him where he is. Even at your right hand. We pray for your blessing to be upon us as homes and as families.

[12 : 06] As friends and neighbours and as communities. The congregation of believers. We pray for the congregations of your church here.

In the community. In the island. And in the nation. And beyond. We pray that you would. Mercifully undertake for us.

By providing a remedy for. The ills of the day. And that each and every one. That have been empowered so to do. Would fulfil their calling.

And do so dutifully. With an eye to your glory. Remember those who govern us. And we pray mercy fully. That mercy would be theirs in abundance.

And that mercy would draw them to yourself. We ask Lord that you would hear our prayers. On behalf of the. Caring professions. Doctors. Nurses.

[13 : 07] To all such. All who support them. In ancillary works. We pray that you would remember them. And that they would be able to. Fulfill their calling.

Bless the sick. And the suffering. Bless all who. Have succumbed to the virus. And even those who are left to grieve.

The loss of loved ones who have been taken. Sanctify these visitations to us we pray. We remember in your presence. All who are your people.

And who are grieving. So that their hearts are heavy. And they lift up their voices to the Lord. Praying that you would hear their prayers. And answer their petitions.

Praying that you are indeed a God. Who is able to. To do for them. What no other can. The promise is theirs as it is ours.

[14 : 05] The day that wait upon the Lord. Shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. And they shall run and not be weary. And they shall walk and not faint.

We pray that you would remember the preaching of your word this day. And that you would encourage those who go out in it. Out with it. That they would be strengthened by your own Adam.

And that they would proclaim. The unsearchable riches of God. In Christ Jesus. As he himself.

As he himself. Left to his people. Before he took. Took a path. To the cross.

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth. Give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled.

[15 : 03] Neither let it be afraid. I pray that you would remember. Those who have cares and concerns at this time.

Those who have been attending hospital. Those who are preparing to attend. Those who are undergoing surgery. And anticipating the treatments of various sorts.

Those we know and those we don't. Oh Lord. Will thou not mensufully be that portion. At this time. Continue with them. And give to them.

A sense of your presence in all things. So hear our prayers. And continue with us this short time. Where I write your word. Pardoning sin in Jesus name.

Amen. We are going to read from the scriptures of the Old Testament. And the book of Psalms. And we will read some verses from Psalm 119.

[16 : 05] Psalm 119. We will read at verse 49. Psalm 119. Remember the word. And to thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

This is my comfort in my affliction. For thy word hath quickened me. The proud have had me greatly in derision. Yet have I not declined from thy law.

I remember thy judgments of old, O Lord. And have comforted myself. Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law.

This I had, because I kept thy precepts. Thou art my portion, O Lord. I have said that I would keep thy words. I entreated thy favour with my whole heart.

[17 : 11] Be fit merciful unto me according to thy word. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments.

The bands of the wicked have robbed me. But I have not forgotten thy law. At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.

I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy.

Teach me thy statutes. And we'll read again from the New Testament Scriptures and Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

And we're reading some verses from chapter 6. Verse 10. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

[18 : 11] Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore having your loins skirt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Above all take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

May God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

And so on. May God add his blessing to this reading of his word, and to his name be the praise. May God add his blessing to this reading of the Lord.

[19 : 32] As you may know, over the last couple of weeks we've been looking at Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, and the passage here that concerns the whole armour of God.

And today we're looking at verse 15, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

As we continue our study, we are made aware of the various elements that belong to the armour of the soldier.

Most likely, in the mind's eye of the apostle, he was thinking of the Roman soldier. Although as we have said, he would have also been aware of the teachings of the Old Testament scriptures, and in particular a passage in Isaiah, but other passages also.

But the soldier's uniform included different elements, and they were all important in their own place.

[20 : 59] And today we're looking at the shoes. Two things are absurd about them. First of all, these shoes were like, in many ways they were like sandals, but they were strapped to the ankles with open toes.

And the soles of the shoes were thick and studded with nails, to ensure that the person who wore them would not slip or slide.

So we have stability and mobility together.

And it may be that's what the apostle has in mind with these words of our text. Now it has to be said that of all the statements made about the Christian armour, it may be that this is one of the most difficult to apply.

Mainly because of the original Greek and the stress in the grammar.

[22 : 10] Obviously there are three words which are crucial to our understanding. There's preparation, and the word for gospel, and peace.

And the shoes can be any one of them depending on where the emphasis falls. For example, it can be the import of the soldier's readiness.

He has to be prepared as he does battle. It is also possible for the emphasis to fall on the gospel's influence, because of the confidence that we can place in it.

It's interesting that there are different translations in the scripture, and often that itself is a clue to us in the way the original is translated.

How the translator may be wanting to emphasise one thing over another. In ESV, which many of our congregations use, we read as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

[23 : 38] The RSV, on the other hand, having shot your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace. In the New English Bible, let the shoes on your feet be the gospel of peace, to give you firm footing.

Some of these translations are interpretive, as you find in some of our Bible versions. Now, it may be that the apostle Paul was being deliberately vague, or less clear, if that's the right way of putting it.

The truth be told, both explanations are right. The emphasis is both on the readiness of the Christian believer for anything that may come his or her way.

Or it may also be, and it has to be, the influence of the gospel on the life of the believer. If we follow the logic of biblical interpretation, where we allow the context to govern our understanding, the weight has to fall on the word gospel.

And some commentators therefore say, it is the gospel that secures our peace with God, giving us the assurance of his favour.

[25 : 16] And this in turn produces in the believer the impetus to respond rapidly on the field of this battle. In other words, it gives you a firm footing from which to contend for the truth against the forces of evil.

And there is no doubt, the word of God is what must fill our mouth when we are doing battle with the enemy.

And our safety depends on our use of that word. It is of the greatest import for us to be aware of the enemy's devices.

When we are thinking, for example, about the armour, it is of the greatest import to remember why we need it. It is to resist the attacks of the enemy.

As we have already seen, the Lord himself showed us by example how he resisted the devil using the word of God.

[26 : 28] Here the gospel is described as the gospel of peace. And the reason for that is that Satan attacks God's people.

And one of his main purposes in attacking them is to take away their peace, disturbing their peace.

If you are a Christian, you may have experienced at the very outset of your Christian experience, the peace of God fills your heart.

You have experienced how Christ in his grace has dealt with sin.

And if you had a time of being burdened because of your sin, if you were suffering from guilt, if your conscience was troubled, if you were fearful of heading into a lost eternity, and you discovered through the mercy of God, the provision made in Christ, then the peace of God filled your heart like at no other time that was shed abroad in your heart.

[27 : 53] And that unforgettable experience is with you. The Bible describes as something that passes all understanding.

The Bible says, And the Bible says, And the Bible says, And the Bible says, And the Bible says, That they found themselves having to be armed against the fiery darts of the wicked one.

We have already read of the subtlety of Satan's devices. And the Bible says, And the Bible says, And the Bible says, And the Bible says, And the Bible says, And he uses the device of false peace, Where some people believe themselves to be secure.

And there are those false prophets and false apostles who declared peace when there was no peace.

And the Bible says, And the devil is adept at presenting such and laying claim to such on behalf of those who have no right to it.

[29 : 14] Satan denies the reality of the genuine bloodbought peace of the gospel. The gospel that tells you, When you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, You have peace with God through him.

And your sins are forgiven. And Satan creates in you fear when he asks, Are you sure your sins are forgiven?

And which sins are they? Are they the sins that you sinned before you came to know Christ? And what of the sins that you are guilty of after you came to Christ?

Or maybe he is saying to you, Your sins are greater than any other sins. Everybody else has got a right to expect forgiveness and to have peace with God.

But not you. So from the point of view of being a sinner at war with God, Peace is now rightfully owed by Jesus.

[30 : 20] And nothing should be allowed to spoil it. And the truth of the matter is nothing can spoil it. Do you remember how earlier on in this epistle, Chapter 2, the apostle speaks of that very thing.

He tells us, Now in Christ Jesus, you who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle partition, middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.

The apostle is clear in his own mind the genuine nature of the peace of the believer. Now the second emphasis that many believe is suggested by the words of our text, Ose I look to the words of the prophet again, when you look to the prophecy of Isaiah.

In chapter 52, the prophet there says, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns.

[32 : 12] Bearing in mind that the shoes were for mobility as well as stability, allowing the soldier, if they were involved in hand-to-hand combat, to be fleet of foot.

Many divines therefore say that the preparation or readiness has to do with the willingness to declare the truth, the desire to share the good news with others.

I wonder if that marks us out as soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we ready always to give a reason to anyone who would come for the hope that is in us?

Have we got proofs from the scripture that we can apply to any situation?

John Stott puts it like this, We are always to be ready to bear witness to the truth of Jesus Christ as God's peacemaker. Always ready.

[33 : 18] Walk in wisdom, Paul says, towards those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

There is supposed to be a readiness to be able to speak to any such, and a willingness to even answer with patience and with kindness, even those who come with antagonism.

We defend the gospel as well as proclaim the gospel. In the words of the apostle Peter, Sanctify the Lord God in your heart, he says.

And always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. With meekness and fear and your good conscience that when they defame you as an evildoer, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

Nothing moves a person who does not believe to enquire about your faith more than seeing it at work in the midst of adversity.

[34 : 42] Of course, not always, but at least a thought is generated. How can this person still believe in God in these circumstances?

And don't be surprised if people are looking at you or looking upon your life at such a time as the one that we are currently involved in.

How Christians behave in such a situation is of great import to those who are in the world with us.

Even though they have no faith themselves. Even though they have no understanding themselves of what the scriptures teach. The Lord gives to his church a promise.

These things have I spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation.

[35 : 45] But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. And sometimes our thinking is short-headed. And when it is everything, our all is focused on the here and now.

Whereas in reality the here and now is but a moment in time. A time that will soon pass. And an eternity beckons that will be beyond measure.

Are we really clothed with the full armour of God? The whole armour of God including our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.

May God allow us to know that peace in full measure. And to live in its light and its heat and its experience.

May he continue with us at this time. Let us join in prayer. O Lord our God, as we bring our cares and concerns before you.

[36 : 58] We pray that our souls would be truly at rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. For as another saint of a past generation said, regarding his own soul.

That the restlessness that marked us out would remain until we found our rest in you. So watch over us we pray.

Cleanse from sin and pardon us in Jesus name. And now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always.

Amen.