

Shoes Of Peace

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[0 : 0 0] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, you can check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. We are so thankful that you did. And our heart is simply to get into the Word of God, but most of all, let this Word get into these hearts and transform us more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, a couple weeks ago, Pastor Mitch preached here at the church and shared a few baseball analogies that took me back to the summer of 2007.

I was doing an internship here at FCC under Pastor Danny, and I got recruited to be on the church softball team that was playing in the men's league here in Greensburg out by the fairgrounds.

And I'll tell you, this church was full of fantastic baseball players. So we were loaded throughout the lineup. And then you had me, the weakest player on the team, as a part-time catcher.

[1 : 0 5] But we ended up winning the league with the genius leadership of our coach, Bill Pratt. And one thing Bill preached was that we were there to be a witness for Christ.

So before the game started, we would gather together and we would pray. And then we truly tried to show the love of Christ throughout the game. But the joke became that we would pray and then we'd beat the snot out of whatever team we played.

But one necessary piece of equipment that we had to have were some cleats. When Mitch Sefton would step up to the batter's box, he had to dig those feet in so he could hit that famous gap shot that usually got him a double or a triple.

When Brian Youngman would come to the plate, he needed his cleats to get him out of the batter's box quickly in case he had to run out an infield single. Richie Messer needed those cleats when someone hit a bomb and he needed to get on his high horse to catch that ball at the fence, plant his feet, and then throw the guy out trying to tag up from first.

And yes, he could do that. And today, much like cleats and softball, we're going to see that we need to put on the spiritual shoes of peace if we're going to stand firm under the attacks of the enemy.

[2 : 2 2] So welcome back to week number five of this series, appropriately called Stand. Church, we are in a spiritual battle. We are called as God's children and soldiers of Christ to stand firm in him.

We talked about the courage and the devotion that it takes. We looked at the enemies that we face with the outside influence of the world, the inside cravings of the flesh, and the roaring lion that is Satan and his demonic army.

We talked about the belt of truth that holds the armor of God in place, being all in with Christ. We looked at the breastplate of righteousness that protects these hearts as we are covered by the blood of Jesus, pursuing a life of righteousness in him.

And then today, we come to this image of the proper shoes needed for battle. So go ahead, if you have your Bibles handy, grab those, go to Ephesians chapter 6, Ephesians 6, and we'll be there in just a moment.

But it's important to understand that our shoes today are a major upgrade over what they would have had in the Apostle Paul's day. As he's writing this letter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he is giving us a picture of a Roman soldier in the first century.

[3 : 50] And while I wouldn't advise wearing sandals into a battle, that's what they had. And there would have been leather straps that kind of wrapped around the soldier's leg.

They were also full of these nails they would put in the bottom of their soles, of these sandals, to give the soldier a firm footing on the ground, to be able to plant your feet and be immovable against the enemy's attacks.

Because listen, if you can't gain traction and you're just slipping and sliding all over the place, that could cost a soldier his life. So these shoes were vital if you were going to stand firm against the enemy.

Now, let's look together here in Ephesians chapter 6, and let's start in verse 14 with the first piece of armor, and then we'll get to what we're going to talk about today.

So Ephesians 6, 14, it says, Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, now listen to this, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

[5 : 06] Now, I even like how the New Living Translation puts this. It says, So if I asked you, What's the good news?

What's the gospel? How would you respond to that? And while it's not rocket science, I think a lot of Christians would still spit and sputter and be like, Uh, Jesus?

I mean, that's a good start, but what about him? See, the gospel is simply, if we're going to put it probably in the simplest terms possible, it's the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and the salvation that comes from him alone.

See, Acts 12, Acts 4, 12, says, Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

In other words, Jesus saw us in our sinful state. He knew that we would fall short of God's righteousness and suffer for all eternity.

[6 : 12] And so the sinless Lamb of God, out of the most amazing love and compassion possible, went to the cross for you and me. He took our place.

He died the death we deserve. And then three days later, from the grave, he rose to conquer death and offer us life on this earth and life eternal.

And listen, we can receive that transforming grace when we come by faith with a repentant heart, making him our Lord and Savior. That's the gospel that brings reconciliation between you and your Heavenly Father.

Between me and my Heavenly Father, those are the shoes fitted with the gospel of peace that give us that traction to stand our ground against the enemy's attacks.

But listen, Satan is always, always trying to get us to turn away from the true gospel, to replace it with a false gospel.

[7 : 15] Gospels like, and I say this, false gospels like, thinking that our good deeds, our money given to charity, that our kind words can save us. If only my good deeds outweigh the bad.

See, that's how most other world religions work. Or what about this false gospel? That Jesus just wants you to always be healthy and wealthy and happy.

And if you're not, then you don't have enough faith. So if you'll just send in \$1,000 to help buy the evangelist's fourth beach house, then you'll receive it back tenfold. That's a false gospel.

What about the false gospel we see preached in some mainline denominations today? Where they twist this word love from its original biblical meaning into this idea that that Christians have to be okay with things that go against the word of God, the heart of God.

Otherwise, they say it wouldn't be loving. You would be judging. Imagine if you defined parental love the same way and you let your kid behave any way they wanted because I don't want to hate on them.

[8 : 20] See, love is always founded in God's truth, compassion, and His call on our lives to pursue holiness in Christ. And when we're told to put on the shoes that come from the gospel of peace, we're being told to let our belief system be founded in the life-changing gospel message.

To never sway from that gospel truth no matter what comes. See, I don't get to decide truth. It's already been decided by the only one who created everything out of nothing in six days.

The one who saw His plan for your life and mine from the beginning and knit us together in our mother's womb. He is the author of truth.

And my job is not to decide truth, but to align myself under His truth that sets me free. And when we do, that's when we're going to be able to stand our ground in the power of Christ against any of Satan's attacks.

And you know what? No matter what comes, because I am covered in Christ's righteousness, we talked about this last week, I have access to His peace that passes all understanding.

[9 : 35] Philippians chapter 4, starting in verse 6, puts it like this. Do not be anxious about anything. Now, I don't know about you, but I get stressed out pretty easy.

I can become anxious in a hurry. And this is something that all of us struggle with. But Paul says, do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation. So that's no matter what you walk through in life.

He says, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, so with a grateful heart, present your request to God. Lay it down at His feet. Now look at verse 7.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, put it like this.

He said, no tongue can tell the depth of that calm which comes over the soul, which has received the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

[10 : 35] So for the rest of our time today, I want us to look just a little bit closer at the difference it can make when we put on the shoes of peace. And the first thing, if you're a note taker, and just a reminder to you, if you're listening right now, that you can go to the YouVersion Bible app.

That's Y-O-U version Bible app. It's absolutely free and it's absolutely incredible at the same time. So if you download that free app and you go to the menu, click on events, go to First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana, and you'll be able to see our outline.

But here's the first thing I want you to see. The shoes of peace bring stability. They bring stability. As you're writing that down, I want to give credit where it's due.

The main points that I'm using come from the late Warren Wiersbe in a small book he wrote about putting on the armor of God. And we're going to use his outline today while also making it personal to us.

But the shoes bring stability. So let me ask you this. Why would you need stability in battle? Why is it important that you're not being tossed all over the place?

[11 : 48] Because when your feet aren't stable and you're standing firm, the enemy, when you're not standing firm, when your feet aren't stable, the enemy can strike so easily?

Let me give an example from the world of boxing. The best boxers in the world make a career out of taking advantage of people who are off balance. Because when you have a fighter who comes in, and let's say that they're a big heavy swinger, you know, they're just throwing haymakers all over the place hoping that one of them lands, he is leaving his body open for attack.

So just picture at the end of his big haymaker punch, what happens? He has left himself open, and he's vulnerable to the enemy. He's unstable.

And listen, it's so sad how many believers live such unstable lives where they're all over the place. Paul even speaks to this in Ephesians 4.14 when he's talking about the importance of stability and even spiritual maturity.

He says, then you'll no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves, blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

[13 : 06] This is why it's so important to know the word of God and to walk in peace that comes because you're a child of the king standing on his promises. You know, I love how Warren Wiersbe said this.

He said, a well-grounded understanding of the word of God gives you stability so your faith will not be shaken. People need to have confidence in life through competence in the word of God.

I'll never forget in a previous ministry, my wife had bought a gift for one of the sweetest ladies in the church. It was a Beth Moore study on the book of John where it was pretty thick because you had all the scriptures and next to the scriptures you would have notes and study questions.

I mean, it was a fantastic layout and it was all intended to take you deeper in your personal study time. Well, this lady came up to Bethany with just complete vulnerability and she said, you know, I've been in the church for 60 some years and I've never studied the word of God for myself until now.

Thank you for this book. I am getting so much out of it. And maybe your story is similar. You come to church, you listen to the preacher, share the word just like now, you take communion, you put your tithe in the plate, you maybe even serve in a ministry, you love Jesus, there's no question about that, and yet you feel like your life is so unstable because you're not in the word of God for yourself.

[14 : 36] Letting that word get into you, letting that word transform that heart so that we can live and walk in the peace of Christ every day. You know, another important piece of stability is proper balance.

I'll never forget probably three or four years into my first ministry in Rush County, the church was growing, we were baptizing people, what felt like about every week, the church in the middle of nowhere, this church that you had to be lost to find is kind of the joke we had.

Man, it was the talk of the community and it was really cool to see the Lord move like he was. So that meant that we got all kinds of interesting visitors and one day a lady comes in and I could tell that she was a follower of Jesus.

She was really engaged in the worship music. She was very responsive to the preaching of the word and after the service she hung around because she wanted to ask me a question. She wanted to know what in times view does this church teach and hold to?

Now, if you're not familiar with the independent Christian church that we are a part of, we are not a denomination because we have no governing hierarchy over us. Our elders lead us.

[15 : 51] We are self-autonomous but we do come from a movement of churches that was all about, this happened in the early 1800s, a group of men and women got fed up with man-made ideas and creeds and traditions saying this is what you should believe and they simply said, nope, we're going back to the word of God.

But we also, in this movement, we allow freedom on non-salvation doctrines like an end times view. See, there are four major views of the book of Revelation and of end times that are all based off scripture that may interpret this apocalyptic literature a little bit differently.

There are even famous theologians who hold to each of these views. So, I told her that I was familiar with the view that she held and I truly respected and still respect the well-known pastor that she aligned with.

However, we allow freedom on this issue as we hope that our people will study the word for themselves and come to some conclusions. Well, she didn't like that answer because if you weren't pre-millennial, then you were lost in her opinion.

About that time, a guy in the church came by and kind of overheard us a little bit and he said, well, I'm a pan-millennialist. If my faith is in Christ alone, it'll all pan out in the end. Well, she didn't like that either and listen, we never saw her again.

[17 : 13] Now, please don't think that I am saying that you should be ignorant and just ignore this important topic. No, I'm not saying that at all. We need to study it. We need to grow. We need to come to some conclusions about what we believe about end times based on the word but my point here is that we have to guard against the instability of just having one doctrine or practice of scripture that we are so gung-ho and passionate about while we ignore the rest.

We should be balanced. Our feet are secure in the gospel of Christ and the peace that comes when we walk in the truth. The shoes of peace bring stability and balance to our lives and to our faith walk with Jesus.

Now, second, the shoes of peace also bring mobility. See, the Roman soldiers would have worn shoes designed to bring stability and balance that you needed to stand strong but listen, they were also designed for mobility because even the best equipped and the best trained soldier won't last if he just stands in the same spot all the time.

You have to move around to attack and even respond to the enemy's moves. The soldier's shoes were light enough for him to move quickly and you know what?

One problem in the church is we often get caught standing still. We aren't willing to change. Now, listen, change is hard for everyone.

[18 : 46] I get it and we never want to change just for the sake of change. Some people just like to change to make everybody mad, right? We always stay true to the word but we're always changing to grow and reach our world for Christ.

You know, there's a famous saying in the church that says, while the message of Christ must never change, the methods will always change. For example, I've had people come up to me and ask, well, pastor, why don't we go door to door to share the gospel anymore?

Why don't we do that as a church? And my answer is that while that worked incredibly in the 50s or the 1960s or 70s, our culture has changed drastically.

Most people are not receptive to being bothered at home. Life is so busy that people want to be left alone in their home and just be able to just chill out and not be bothered.

That's why everybody has signs on their door, no soliciting. For instance, think about how you respond when you see a Jehovah's Witness walking down your street. Quick, honey, get the kids in their bedrooms, close the blinds, turn off the lights, and everybody be still until they go away.

[19 : 58] And then you hear, shh, everybody be quiet. Whew, they're gone. They're at the Lawrence's house now.

You guys could all come out, right? See, that's about 95% of the population who don't know Jesus. And I may be conservative in that number. Here's how Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 9, starting in verse 19.

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible. To the Jews, I became like a Jew to win the Jews.

To those under the law, I became like one under the law, though I myself am not under the law so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law, I became like one not having the law, though I am not free from God's law, but I'm under Christ's law so as to win those not having the law.

To the weak, I became weak, he says. To win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

[21 : 05] He says, I do this, all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings. Does that sound like a man who wasn't willing to change methodology to impact the world for Christ?

Absolutely not. He was always moving. And listen, we can't stand still either. Satan is always changing his tactics. We have the mobility to respond to those changes.

But let me make something very clear. We will never, ever, ever compromise the truth of the gospel. We won't do it to be popular.

We won't do it to be more tolerant. However, it's put in our culture, we will never, ever compromise the truth. But we will seek to be culturally relevant as a church.

We will try to meet a lost world right where they are to bring the peace of Christ to them. And you know what? That brings us perfectly to our third point here.

[22 : 06] The shoes of peace bring opportunity. In this spiritual battle against the enemy, the Lord not only gives us stability and mobility, but he also gives us opportunity to live out the mission Christ has called us to.

No soldier goes into battle without knowing what he's fighting for. And not only are we fighting to protect ourselves from Satan's attacks so we might be found faithful, but we're also fighting to advance the kingdom of God.

See, in Matthew chapter 28 starting in verse 19, what's often been called the Great Commission, our Savior puts it like this. He says, Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. Why should other people's salvation matter to us? It's because we want them to stand firm in the gospel of peace just like us, right?

We want the chains of pride or selfishness or alcoholism or drug abuse or lust or envy or jealousy or sexual immorality or narcissism or rudeness or gossip or slander.

[23 : 25] Every sin that goes against the heart of God, we want that to be ripped off in the name of Jesus. I don't know why I got this picture in my mind because it's kind of goofy, but when I was thinking about the shackles of sin being ripped off, I couldn't help but picture the movie Forrest Gump.

And I'm sure you remember when Forrest was a boy, he says his spine was as crooked as a question mark. So the doctor put him in some leg braces that he was in for a long time to kind of get him straightened out.

But it was hard for him to move around because these braces brought a lot of challenges. And one day, he's walking with Jenny and some kids are chasing after him on their bicycles and Jenny's yelling, run Forrest, run!

And he starts to run and the braces start to break. Do you remember that scene? Until finally, they just shatter off of his legs and he outruns those boys on bikes.

Come to find out, he's quite the little runner. And even as an adult, he ends up running across the whole country multiple times because he just felt like running.

[24 : 32] But you know what? That picture of those braces being shattered off his legs, I can't help to think about the joy that we should have as believers when God uses a broken vessel like us to share the gospel with those who don't know him.

To know that God can use us in Jesus' ultimate mission to seek and save the lost. that we have the privilege of being his ambassadors in this world and that peace of Christ, that peace of Christ rips off the chains of sin and sets the captives free.

You know, here recently I was talking to a friend of mine from high school who has attended our church a few times and we were just talking about all the dumb things we did in high school and how lost we were in our own sins and I looked at him and I said, can you believe that we're both standing here in church covered by the blood of Christ walking in his peace that passes all understanding?

Can you believe that we both are sharing our testimony preaching the word of God and we just marveled at how good and full of grace our God really is?

And I want you to know that it's so important that you and I put on these shoes of peace standing firm on the gospel of Christ that we are always ready we are ready to stand firm for him so get in that word let that word get into you so you can stand strong against Satan's attacks so you can fight this spiritual battle with stability with mobility and with an awesome opportunity to shine for Jesus Amen Alright pray with me Heavenly Father Father we just thank you for how you have just spoken to us through your word today I thank you for how your word just has a way of just connecting with us right where we are and Father I just pray right now that you will just drive this word into our hearts and make us look more and more into the image of Jesus thank you for these words of hope these words of life that you have spoken over us and Father I just we just we not I but we just give you permission to have your way in us right now help us

[26 : 58] Jesus to walk in your peace that passes all understanding not to just talk about it not to just amen and throw our hands up and run around church but help us to actually walk in our daily lives according to your word and by your power and through your peace so Father thank you thank you for these words of life we pray all this in Jesus precious name and God's people said right where you are amen and amen hey I just want to give you this invitation I don't know where you are in your walk with Christ I don't know if you've even begun a walk with Christ I don't know if it's a complete accident that you're even listening to this audio broadcast but I know that God has brought you here for a reason and so I would love to give you this invitation once again my name is Ray Sweet I'm the lead pastor at First Christian Church in Greensburg Indiana and if you have some faith questions or you even want to talk about what it means to give your life to Jesus we would love to come alongside you as a church and just help you just like others have done for us so here's a couple ways you can reach out you can give us a call in the church office at 812-663-8488 that's 812-663-8488 or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com hey God bless you and thanks for tuning in today