

Footwear Fit For Purpose

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[0 : 00] For a short time this evening let's turn together to Ephesians chapter 6. We're going to continue looking at this passage dealing with the armor of God and tonight we're looking at verse 15.

We'll read at verse 13.

Having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace or the preparation of the gospel of peace. We'll look at the meaning of readiness the word shortly.

It might be thought that the footwear of a soldier is not all that important. And indeed having looked at the breastplate and looking at the helmet that covers the head later on in the passage.

It is true that in a sense what covers the feet, the footwear of the soldier doesn't have the same level of prominence or importance as the breastplate or the helmet that covers the head.

[1 : 25] Because obviously all the vital organs are actually contained within the torso and the head itself of course too. If you get injured in your foot nevertheless it does cripple you in terms of carrying out your duties as a soldier.

And for the Roman soldier which Paul was obviously using as his image or pattern for this description. The footwear needed to be fit for purpose.

They didn't wear boots. They wore sandals. But the sandals worn by the Roman soldier who made of good quality leather. Heavyish leather.

But they also had metal studs on the soles of the sandals. So to give them grip. So that they would actually have not only a protection against some rough roads or some spikes that sometimes were placed by enemies.

So that soldiers marching on would injure their feet if they weren't well shod. There was that to it. But there was also the fact that the sandal needed to give the soldier stability.

[2 : 39] If he was going to be with a sword in one hand and his shield in the other and he didn't have good adhesion.

Good sandals that would really stand firmly if they would slide all over the place. Well obviously that was a huge problem.

And his life would be very soon in danger. The sandal also however was important not only for strength but also for lightness of movement.

Although it was a strong and well made sandal it was also relatively light so that the soldier could move quickly. And for ease of movement as well as for strength and stability the Roman sandal was absolutely fit for purpose.

And as you come to the spiritual application of that in the passage which is what the apostle is really setting out for the Ephesians. Then we can take it that these are the two or two of the main things that are emphasized in this verse as the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

[3 : 52] Having shoes for your feet prepared by the gospel of peace as that makes you ready for the engagement with the enemy. These are the two things that really are involved in this word readiness or preparation as it is in the AV.

As shoes for your feet having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. The readiness is really having the two things we mentioned. Stability and mobility.

Two things absolutely crucial for the Roman soldier but crucial in a spiritual sense also for the Christian and for the Christian church and for God's people.

You need the stability on the one hand but you need the mobility, the quickness of movement on the other side. These are the two things we want to look into briefly this evening.

Looking at the spiritual meaning of them, how they apply to us in our own settings and what we can learn from it in terms of our facing the enemy. This skillful, this devious, this powerful enemy that we

face in the devil and the powers of darkness.

[4 : 59] And we'll come to look at the end of the study on the gospel of peace and how that is the way that this preparation or this readiness, the stability and the mobility is something that is brought about by the gospel.

And by the effect of the gospel in our lives. Let's look at the stability first of all as mentioned. Stand therefore with your shoes on your feet, the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

Now the stability that we need spiritually has two sides to it. First of all there's a stability, there needs to be a stability as to what you believe. And there needs to be a stability secondly as to how you live.

And the stability that's mentioned, that's meant by the passage here is firstly the stability in terms of what we believe. You pass your mind back to chapter 4.

We looked back at it last time as well. I think verse 14 there, chapter 4, talks about how we, Lord's dealing with the issue of unity and growth and so on as well.

[6 : 11] It does say so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about with every wind of doctrine by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

So it's using language there that's very reminiscent of chapter 6, the scheming of the devil, the craftiness, the enemy that we face and the agents that he uses, the enemies of the church.

That's, he says, important against that, that we don't get tossed around like something that's tossed around on the waves. That we have in terms of our doctrine a stability.

And that doesn't just mean that we really know what we believe. It means that we have confidence in what we believe. Soldiers needed to have confidence going out to battle.

There was no use if he went out to battle and wasn't really sure if his shoes would do the job. Or if he was given shoes that were inferior for any reason. He knew that he wasn't properly equipped to face the enemy.

[7 : 17] He wouldn't have a stability. He wouldn't be able to stand properly and balance and use his weapons properly. And you and I need a stability in terms of what we believe, of the doctrines of the faith, of the gospel itself.

A stability that involves a confidence in these as the truth of God. We already looked at the belt of truth and why it's mentioned first.

That it brings everything else under its control. Well, so, you take that with you as you look at the preparation of the gospel of peace. In terms of stability as to what you believe.

We need to have that confidence in what we believe. Because that's one of the problems that you find down through the ages. And it's a problem no less in our own day as well.

A problem of instability in terms of what Christians believe. Because you'll find some that don't really know their doctrines very well. And they're open to the assaults of the evil one.

[8 : 20] We have to be confident in the Bible. We have to have a stability and a confidence in this as the word of God.

We have to have a confidence in Jesus as to who he is. As to what he has done. As to the sufficiency of his work. We have to have a confidence in the fact of his resurrection from the dead.

That it's not something that's just been invented. Or something that you may have some doubts about. It happened. It's a fact. Your life is based on it. Your hope is based on it.

You must have confidence in it. You must never give way to the enemy that would seek to instill in your mind a doubt. As to whether or not Jesus rose from the dead. That's what was happening in Corinth.

That's why you've got that great chapter of 1 Corinthians 15. Where Paul is saying if that is really the case. If you think for a moment that such a fact is not really a fact after all.

[9 : 16] Then your faith is useless. You are still in your sins. Now the devil's strategy will very much include a breaking or a weakening of your confidence in the important doctrines of what you believe.

The important doctrines of the faith. Of the gospel. And his wiles and his schemes. As this passage puts it. Will focus on that among other things.

He will for example. He will try to convince you. That doctrine really is not all that important. That you don't really have to think very hard or very long or hardly at all about the person of Jesus.

The kind of death he died. And the facts of the resurrection. And the issues of eternity. What really matters is that you're a practical person. That you get on with doing things in the world.

And that's really what makes you a Christian. Not what you believe. Forget about really being concerned about what you believe. Just get on with the practicalities. Well that's one of the very successful ways.

[10:29] In which the devil weakens your confidence in the truth of God. So that he can get in and destabilize your life. Of course you have to be practically minded.

Of course we have to be involved in good works. Nothing of what we're saying about doctrine or about confidence in the truth or in the doctrine. Is an enemy of practical Christianity.

But you just deal with practical Christianity or practical works. Of love, of mercy, of whatever. Good though they are. Great though they are. Necessary though they are.

Focus on that itself. And forget about doctrine. And you're soon really unstable. You don't have your feet properly in a position where you can stand. You're not shod properly with the readiness of the gospel of peace.

So it's important what we believe. But it's important that we have confidence in what we believe. Never let the devil take you away from a confidence.

[11:31] A complete confidence in the fundamental truths of the Bible. Whatever way he tries. Immediately resist that.

And tell him without confidence in these things. We mentioned some of them there. Jesus himself. Death, resurrection. How we come to be accepted with God by faith in Christ.

The forgiveness of sins. The need for regeneration and being born again. All of these things the devil will persuade you are not important. They are exceedingly important.

They are the basis of truth on which our lives are founded. Secondly you have to have stability in how you live. Look at verses chapter 4 again and verse 17 there for example.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding.

[12:36] They are alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart and so on. But this is not the way you learned Christ.

In other words you don't go back to the things that you once held precious before you came to know the Lord. Some things you can take with you of course.

But there are things in terms of lifestyles and practices that belong to the old life. You have put off these things Paul is saying to the Ephesians. You have put on the new man.

You have put on Christ. You have put on this new life. And again it's one of the devil's very clever strategies. That he will try and persuade you again that there shouldn't really be a very distinct difference between you as a Christian.

And the kind of lifestyle you once had. I know there are some people that have lived a very decent and civil and upright life.

[13:38] Especially if they have been brought up in Christian homes. And they maybe find it very difficult to actually draw the line as to when they were converted and how they became a Christian. They just feel that that was something that they gradually grew into.

There is nothing wrong with that. But that's not what we are saying. What we are saying is the devil will try to persuade you that your lifestyle, the way you live your life, your priorities, the principles that really are foundational to your life.

That actually there is not that much of a distinction or a line to be drawn between that and the principles of the world. And the best commentary on that is really in the book of Job.

Because you remember that Job in his profound and grievous sufferings was tested really you could say to the limits.

And just remember who was tested really you could say to the limits of the people of Job.

[15:03] And that's one of the things that really confounded some of Job's friends. Even his wife said to him, curse God and die. Why do you go on believing in this God when he's brought such things into your life?

When he's allowed such things into your life? What's the point of going on trusting in that kind of God? If that's the kind of God you're trusting in, then you're foolish. Just curse him and die.

Be done with it. And Job responded, you find it in chapter 13. And at verse 15.

Though he slay me, yet I will place my hope in him. Or I will trust in him. And then in chapter 23 you have some wonderful verses there.

Where Job is trying to, as he wrestles with what's happened in his life. How his life has changed so drastically. He doesn't really find God near him as he used to.

[16:03] He's not here. He's not going forwards. He's not there. On the left hand he's not there. On the right hand I do not see him. But he knows the way that I take.

You see Job's not saying it's important that I know the way that God is taking with me. He's trying to wrestle with that. He can't break through into the whys and the wherefores of God's sovereignty. And the mystery of God's providence. But what he's saying is he knows the way that I take. And when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.

My foot has held fast to his steps. I have kept his way and have not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of his lips. I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.

Now there's a man who is resolute. Absolutely committed to the life that he has in following God, in trusting in God.

[17:14] And in these great exclamations of his faith, Job's showing tremendous stability. His feet have been shod by the preparation of God's truth.

And that's why he's saying, I have held to the words of his mouth. I esteem these words more precious to me than my daily food.

And the devil will come to you and to me and say, surely you're not going to go on really following this God fully when he's allowed such things to happen in your experience.

When he's not done the kind of things you've been praying for. And you've been praying for things that you know are in accordance with the truth of God. But it hasn't happened. And you've been waiting all these years and nothing seems to be happening.

The devil will persuade you that that's really not the kind of God that's worth trusting in at all. Remember that was the dilemma the psalmist found himself in.

[18:17] In Psalm 73. Where he looked at the prosperity, as he put it, of the wicked. The people who are enemies of God. How easily they seemed to go through life. How they weren't burdened about things like eternity and death.

And acceptance with God and righteousness and holiness of life. They didn't have these burdens. They didn't want these things. They had cast off all of these things. Surely, he says, I have washed my hands in vain.

Would it not be better for me that I was somewhat like them? And he went into the house of God. And God met him in his temple.

And then he concluded, How foolish I was. I was like a beast before you. Surely you have set them in slippery places.

Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold me by the right hand. You guide me with your counsel. And afterwards, you will take me into your glory.

[19:27] There's the resoluteness coming back. He had been on the brink, as he put it himself. My feet had very nearly slipped. Why? Because the devil had persuaded him, or partly persuaded him, that some or other he should try to be more like these people who were at ease in the world.

Until God brought home to him, the foolishness of that thinking. And that's what Jesus himself so often stressed in his ministry.

Take one example, the parable of the sower. Four types of soil. Only one type really productive permanently. The third one is one that interests us in regard to this particular verse in Ephesians chapter 6.

Where what represented these thorns and thistles that grew up, the weeds that grew up, and choked the growing seed. Where Jesus said, The cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches, Choke the world and it becomes unproductive.

The Lord knew so well that our stability depends on the truth of God, the gospel of peace. And on our confidence, not only in what we believe, but our commitment as to how to live.

[20:48] Confidence in the truth and commitment to following it and living it out. And not being taken aside by this scheming devil that would slacken you in your perseverance.

That would persuade you, you should just draw back a wee bit. Not be as concerned to live in a way that is pleasing to God in every aspect of life.

Well that's stability and that's just very briefly covered. The surface of it gives you an idea of what this includes. This readiness given by the gospel of peace.

It has this stability involved in it. It has this stability in what you believe. It's stability in terms of how you live. Commitment as well as confidence in the truth of God.

But secondly, there's mobility. And the soldiers, as we said, needed to have mobility. Needed to be able to move quickly when that was required. There are two things in mobility, spiritual mobility, that we need to actually just cover briefly.

[21 : 56] First of all, an alertness for moving. And secondly, a willingness to change. An alertness for moving.

Think about a soldier, not just the Roman soldier, but any soldier. They can be moved very quickly from one place to another. They may be one day in barracks somewhere in this country.

Next week they might be in Afghanistan. Or somewhere that's really quite different. In climate, in the type of people, in the culture. That's a very, very big change.

And they have to actually be prepared and ready for that change. They have to be ready to move. And alert to move. Alert to the needs of moving into a different environment.

Different things that they need to keep up with. And that's true of the Christian as well. And of the Christian church. We need to actually keep abreast of developments that are taking place in people's thinking.

[22 : 54] In the church's thinking. In the world's thinking. And especially in the workings of our enemy. Because the devil never stays really on the same tack.

He will always change his line of attack. He will always change his method of attack. He will always try to take you to a different place. And on a personal level.

That means you have to always be aware. Or seek always to be aware and alert for moving.

Moving to wherever the enemy has moved to. Where he's now trying to get through the armor.

Where he's now bringing his attack to your notice. Maybe it's some providence that God has brought into your life. Maybe it's something that's happened elsewhere. Maybe it's an illness.

Maybe it's something that's got you worried or anxious. But that will always give the enemy a means by which he can change the direction of his assault. And you have to be aware and alert for that.

[23 : 52] Be alert for moving. And the need to move. And it's the same of course on the wider level for the church as well. The church has to be alert to movements in the development of world views if you like.

Or the development of the arguments that are against the gospel. And against the church. And against God. These are never static. They're never the same from one generation to the next.

They always move around. They always move on. They always take on different shapes. And you and I as Christians have a responsibility as far as we can to maintain our alertness as to what's going on.

In the ways in which the gospel is being attacked. Because what the devil wants us to do. Not just in terms of our personal lives. But in terms of our life as a people.

As a congregation or any church. The devil wants you to just stand still. And not be ready to move about. And just think of staying in the one place.

[24 : 59] The Roman soldier had to actually be alert to the need to move. Because for one thing. Success in war.

Not just in those days. But even today. Success in war. Is very largely dependent on speed of movement. Efficiency of movement.

If you can get a whole lot of equipment and people and soldiers to one place quickly. Strategically. You've got a huge advantage over your enemy.

And you need to do that spiritually as well. You have to keep moving with the way that the enemy himself moves. And brings about changes in the way that the truth is attacked.

Sadly. The church. And ourselves individually too. Are very prone to standing still. Not being prepared to move.

[26 : 01] To change to. As we'll see in a minute. To accommodate to a new situation. One of the worst things you can see. Is the church fighting old battles. Things which were fought in the middle ages.

Not talking about literal battles here. Talking about battles to do with the truth of God. As if we were still living in those ages. Things have moved on.

And we have to fight the battles. That are currently. Currently being waged. Against the church. And against the truth. And we have to be aware.

Of which battles they are. So there's an alertness. For moving in this mobility. But there's along with that. And this is also very important. A willingness to change.

Like we said. The soldier. Has to be able to change. As the environment change. In which the soldier finds himself. Whether it's cold climate. One week.

[27 : 01] And hot climate. Or the other way around. But there has to be an ability. And a willingness to change. And a willingness to adapt. To those changes. You can't be a soldier.

In the far north. If you're going to be just living the same way. Or preparing yourself the same way. As if you're in the tropics. It's the same spiritually.

We keep the same principles. Of the gospel. But there are some things. That do need to change. And that we need to be willing.

To have changed. Things which are not going to affect. The gospel itself. But will very much be part of. How we present the gospel. Or how we bring the gospel.

To the world. Or how we actually try to. Stand against the way. That the world is seeking. To remove the gospel from us. If you think of.

[28 : 01] The changes in weaponry. For example. That have taken place. Over the centuries. Not even over the centuries. Just over the space of one century or two. The absolutely useless.

And hopeless. Nowadays. To go out with an ordinary gun. Onto the field of battle. Nowadays there are sophisticated missiles.

Not the old fashioned guns. That once rolled around the fields of France. In the first world war. Or dragged through mud. Nowadays there aren't such things.

There are sophisticated guided missiles. Computer controlled. The same with aircraft. The same with ships. And in spiritual terms. We have to.

Have the same. Willingness to adapt. We don't adapt the gospel. We don't adapt the truth of God. We don't change any of the two. We don't take stuff away from it. We don't add to it.

[29 : 01] We don't tamper with it. We maintain it. As it is. We actually keep to it. As it is. We have confidence. In it. That's our stability. But there are things.

Which do. Need to change in the way. That we. Perhaps presented. Or changes that we've. Seen ourselves. The introduction of. A new version of the Psalms. Or a new version of the scriptures.

As long as it's through. To the original text. Of the scripture. It's bringing it into. A language. That people can actually follow. Today. Now of course. We all need. Whatever language it is.

A.V. ESV. NIV. Whatever. We all need the spirit of God. To bless it to us. To open up our minds. To the truth. And to the meaning of the truth. But we must never make the mistake.

That the devil. Will actually want you to make. And that is that. All. Such. Changes. Are the same. As actually. Changing the gospel.

[30 : 00] Or watering down the gospel. There are some. Groups of Christians. In the world. Whose boss. Is. Is. Nothing. Has changed.

Here. We've not changed. Anything. For 50 years. That's the equivalent. Of being stuck.

In a trench. It's not fighting. A warfare. There. At the very best. It's in retreat. Every soldier.

Including the spiritual one. Has to be adaptable. Has to actually make. Necessary changes. In order to keep up with. The developments.

Of the day. Of the day. And. That's why. We're making. The difference. Between things. That can be changed. And should be changed. And things. That must be adapted.

[30 : 53] And can be adapted. In contrast. To the gospel. Itself. And things. Which are fundamental. And cannot. And should not. Be tampered with. Sometimes difficult.

To get the distinction. But nevertheless. In most cases. It's very easy to do. It's something. That we have to actually. Keep working at. So there's a willingness.

To change. In the mobility side. And that means. Also. An alertness. For moving. That mobility. Is so important. To the Christian. To be mobile.

In the proper way. Not to have the heavy boots. That weigh you down. Not to have. The. Weaponry. That belonged. To two centuries ago.

Not to have. The kind of. Mindset. That says. There must be. No room. For change. At all. In the church's. Experience. Stability.

[31 : 50] And mobility. Then. But it's by. The gospel. Of peace. As shoes. For your feet. Having on. The readiness. Given by. The gospel. Of peace.

Now the phrase. Is relatively simple. The gospel. We know what the gospel is. That's the good news. Of God. In Christ. The salvation. That is in him. That is the gospel. The announcement. Of that salvation. That's in Christ. In the. The announcement. Of the gospel. That's the good news. And it's the gospel. Of peace. Somewhat strange. In a way.

That. What's described. In the gospel. In the gospel. In the gospel. Of peace. Is itself. The means. By which. We engage. For war. By which.

We are equipped. For. Warring. With the enemy. But that's how it is. And the peace. That's mentioned there. Is itself. Absolutely. Vital. To make us. Ready. For the conflict.

[32 : 45] You can't be. Ready. For the conflict. Without knowing. Of this peace. That peace. In the bible's teaching. I'm just going to cover it. Very briefly. In summary. There are four elements.

To it. Firstly. Peace. With. God. Peace. Between ourselves. And God. Peace. In our relationship. With God. Romans 5.

Therefore being justified. By faith. We have. Peace. With God. Through our Lord. Jesus Christ. The relationship. Has totally changed. It's on a new foundation. We are friends.

Reconciled. By God. To himself. Secondly. There's peace. In our hearts.

There's the peace. Of the formal relationship. With God. But there's peace. Experienced. There's the peace. That's sometimes. Not as prominent. As you'd like it. And other times.

[33 : 43] That comes to fill you. And give you comfort. It's part of the experience. Of knowing Christ. As Paul put it. To the Philippians. Talking about.

Prayer. And supplication. With thanksgiving. As an antidote. To being. Overanxious. And worried. No. He says. Don't be that. Instead.

In everything. By prayer. And supplication. With thanksgiving. Let your request. Be made known. To God. And the peace. Of God. That passes. All understanding. Shall garrison.

Your hearts. And minds. Through Christ Jesus. It's the same peace. The peace. That is. From the gospel. That comes. To fill your heart.

That. Defends you. Against the enemy. Who wants you. To be anxious. And worried. And straining. In your life. Thirdly. There's peace.

[34 : 39] With one another. One of the great features. Of Ephesians 2. Is the final. Part of it. Where Paul speaks there. About being one.

In Christ. But also. Being reconciled. To God. And to one another. He's talking there. Of course. Of Jew and Gentile. The great division. That was in the world. Till the gospel came.

Remember. He's saying that. You. Were one time Gentiles. In the flesh. But he says. He is our peace. Christ is our peace. Who has made us.

Both one. And has broken down. In his flesh. The dividing wall. Of hostility. In other words. He is saying. We have come together. As a people. Not only to be reconciled.

To God. But to be reconciled. To each other. That's why. All the way through. This great epistle. The hell square. Paul. Talks about. The importance.

[35 : 34] Of loving one another. Forgiving one another. Being tender. Hearted. Towards one another. Looking after each other's interests. So many different ways.

In which Paul. Deals with that. As he brings it into the. The family environment too. What children are. Children. Are to be. And what parents are to be. And what husbands are to be. What wives are to be. That's all to do with. This environment. Of reconciliation. All the. Wonderful. Grace.

That has been. Shown in Christ. In its effects. In our lives. The peace. That we have with. One another. Or. You might say. As Colossians.

Put it. Colossians 3. And. Verses. 14. And 15. It says there. Above all these. Put on love. Which binds everything together.

[36 : 26] In perfect harmony. And let the peace. Of Christ. Rule. Rule. And by that. He means. Be a referee. Or an umpire. Let the peace. Of Christ. Rule. In your hearts.

To which indeed. You are called. In one. Body. That's the third one. The peace. That we have. With one another. There's another peace. As well. That's important. And that's peace.

With everybody else. I don't know. If it's the most difficult one. But it's certainly. A difficult one. You find it in.

Jesus emphasis. In the. Beatitudes. That God's people. Are to be peacemakers. That's one thing. To be a lover. Of peace. That's another thing. To actually. Make peace. And to go out. In your life. To try. And make peace. Where it doesn't exist. Blessed are. The peacemakers.

[37 : 24] For they shall be called. The sons of God. Why are they called. The sons of God. Because. As peacemakers. We are. Like. Our father.

We are like the one. Who made peace. For us. And brought peace. Between us. And himself. And one another. And. In Romans.

Chapter 12. You have that. Emphasis. Finally. In the. Way. With which peace. Is with. With other people. Out with. The church. As well. Romans 12.

Verse 18. Where you find. If possible. Or. As much. As it be possible. So far. As it depends. On you. Live. Peaceably. With all.

Now. That doesn't mean. If it be possible. Doesn't there. Mean that. Well. You just. Quickly. Realize. It's not possible. So you give up. It's the opposite.

[38 : 19] It means. You never give up. It means. That. You go to. Every length. Possible. To live. At peace.

With all men. With everybody. Around you. With everybody. You come into. Contact with. What great heights.

And demands. Are made of us. What great grace. We have promised. And what a great set. Of armor. We have. To wear. As Christians. The belt.

Of truth. The breastplate. Of righteousness. And the readiness. Given. By the gospel. Of peace. So that we can. Have stability. And mobility.

Through the gospel. Let's pray. Lord our God.

[39 : 16] Our familiarity. With the gospel. Leaves us. At times. Unappreciative. Of all that it. Contains. For us. And when we fail to appreciate.

Its great effects. In the way that our lives. Are affected. By it. we pray that you would grant to us Lord daily the grace that we need in order to use your gospel so that we be prepared for conflict and defended against our enemy we give thanks for the gospel of peace, for the peace of the gospel the way that it gives that stability and that mobility to your people for the way that it informs our minds and warms our heart the way that it enables us to move and to be the kind of people we should be in relation to the challenges of our day make us Lord wise and effective, give us not only to be armed for our own defense but also for the defense of the gospel hear us we pray for Jesus sake, Amen