

Our Spiritual Warfare (5) - Footwear Fit For Purpose

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Date: 08 December 2021

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] it's been a wee while since we were in this passage um but we're picking it up again this evening at verse 15 especially let's just read from verse 10 so we can remind ourselves of what we've already covered and how this passage just holds together so ephesians 6 at verse 10 finally be strong in the lord and in the strength of his might put on the whole armor of god that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers against the authorities against the cosmic powers over this present darkness against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places 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 firm stand therefore having fastened on the belt of truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and thus choose for your feet having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace especially verse 15 where we come to this part of the armor that's called the shoes for the feet in other words the readiness given by the gospel of peace so we're really looking at footwear fit for purpose footwear fit for purpose in a spiritual sense i'm quite sure there are still it's still the case with youngsters that grannies and parents will often say to them as they look at their flimsy footwear and they go out into all sorts of weather why don't you wear proper shoes why are you wearing these things instead of putting on your wellies or instead of putting on something that's more weatherproof than these flimsy things that certainly was the case in my young day i'm sure it's still the case youngsters being youngsters well this footwear that's fit for purpose is referring of course to the roman soldier roman soldier had to have footwear fit for purpose with a very important part of his armory very important part for him in terms of how he carried out his tasks as a soldier in the roman army we recall ourselves perhaps the complaint that was made at the time of the iraq war there was quite a time at least there since the outbreak of the war when soldiers were complaining they didn't have adequate footwear to wear and supplies had to be rushed together and they had gone into battle some of them without the proper footwear that they were meant to have for that particular campaign so it seems well the roman soldier actually wore heavy sandals or substantial sandals they were but these sandals were specifically made of leather but also had studs on the bottom of them so that the soldier was actually kept in terms of balance but in terms of grip as well they had to be strong to withstand the rigors of marching and also on the battlefield but they also had to be light enough to enable movement rapidly when the army needed to move so the strength and the lightness were actually characteristics of these sandals worn by the roman soldier they needed to be very strong for stability that's why they had studs on the soles of these sandals you can just imagine how difficult it would be for a soldier having to face an enemy having to move quickly if he was sliding all over the place if he didn't have the grip if his shoes or sandals just weren't up to the job and in the same way if they had to move quickly it was no use actually having a heavy set of shoes or a pair of heavy boots and they had to be light enough to move quickly while strong enough also to withstand the pressures of of marching and of being on the battlefield and that's a spiritual

application that the apostle paulus has in mind as he's now writing to the ephesian christians with regard to this description of the armor here on your as shoes on your feet having on the readiness given by the gospel of peace and you can easily transfer what we've said about the roman soldiers footing into that spiritual application that the apostle is making here because that that stability and also that mobility are so important for us spiritually as well as spiritual soldiers of christ we need to have the stability by which we will maintain our stance our position especially against the wiles of satan the schemes of the devil which is what he's dealing with but also we'll have to have the kind of footwear spiritually that enables us to move quickly when it's necessary and those of course it's

really pretty much to do with our thinking with our actions in a spiritual and moral sense as well and you see it's saying here that this is provided by the gospel of peace this is the readiness given by the gospel of peace in other words it's the gospel of peace that provides or in fact it is the manufacturer if you like under god of these spiritual shoes for us we come to possess these shoes and we come to use these shoes as soldiers of christ because it's the gospel of peace that has actually brought that to us the gospel of peace applies to our lives that stability and that readiness to move and to react to whatever is going on around us in terms of presenting the truth of god to the world in which we live it's a strange thing in many ways and in some ways at least that what he's saying here about the gospel as the gospel of peace is the very thing that prepares you for this spiritual warfare but that's just how it is the gospel that creates peace is the gospel that equips us for war for spiritual war peace that we have with god comes to us via the gospel the peace that we have in our hearts as philippians 4 puts it it comes through the gospel it's it's something that is worked by god in our hearts through the gospel and also the the peace that we have for with one another the love that we have with for one another the peace that we have in living together spiritually as christians is again the peace that comes from the gospel of peace and the more we are familiar with that gospel of peace the more these aspects of the gospel's preparation of us is evident in our lives in facing this enemy this the devil and his schemes so let's look at these and you could say that it also applies to those outside of our own fellowship of course even the world around us is something that we are concerned to actually live peaceably amongst them as romans chapter 12 and verse 18 puts as far as possible live at peace with all people so peace is a great characteristic of god's people amongst each other in relation to god even in relation to the world around them and it is the gospel that brings that peace to us that announces it is through the gospel it's applied to us that we come to wear the the the the shoes that are called the gospel's preparation for us facing our spiritual enemy so let's look at the stability first and then we'll look at the issue of mobility mentioned these two in relation to the roman soldier so we'll just try and follow that out spiritually as well we need the stability that the preparedness that the preparation of the gospel of peace gives us that's a stability first of all in what you believe and it's a stability secondly in how you behave and how we live what we believe and how we behave how we live are so closely bound together always in the teaching of the bible we need a stability in what we believe it has to mind back to chapter four for a moment and a chapter four and verse 14 paul is talking there about the growth of the body using another familiar metaphor for our spiritual existence with each other and relationships what he gave to the church what jesus gave to the church evangelists pastors teachers and so on for building up the body of christ till we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of god to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of christ why so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine by human craftiness by human cunning and craftiness in deceitful schemes and that fits in with chapter six so well but what he has there is a picture of being thrown around us you find an object on top of a sea that's just boiling with with uh with the swelling waves and that object is being thrown around and moved about very easily at the disposal of these elements what are you saying here this is really why he says we need to grow in faith and of the knowledge of the son of god so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves carried about by every wind of doctrine you see he's saying there that the the doctrines that are false teachings are really like a strong gale like a strong wind that actually carries everything with it and he's saying that's why we need the stability that the gospel gives us that's why we need the growth he's mentioning in chapter four a growth that comes through the gospel a growth that comes by the blessing of god through the gospel and that prepares us to face the enemy that prepares us in a way that stabilizes our lives in other words we need to have confidence in what we believe confidence in the bible as the word of god confidence that this is the word of god confidence that it's not something that describes other than the word of god confidence that it has the authority of god in it built into its words built into its teachings confidence in the jesus the word speaks about and brings to us in the gospel you see it's always about the gospel the preparedness of the gospel of of of peace and that's what brings us the confidence the confidence to stand the stability to stand against the wiles of the devil because in that gospel that's where we find god's teaching about all of these issues and teaching about ourselves and teaching about the world and the nature of the world and the nature of the world and the opposition of the world and where it's come from and what it's about the gospel prepares us for stability in the face of all these issues and gives us that stability the more we're blessed by god through the gospel of peace now you see that just fits so

well against the devil strategy remember cast your mind back to what he's saying here that you may be able to stand to hold your ground to be stable against the schemes of the devil therefore take up the whole armor of god that you may be able to withstand and having done all to stand firm it's all about the gospel and the blessing that comes through the gospel and our familiarity with the gospel and our prizing of the gospel and holding on to the teaching of the gospel because the devil really wants uh if at all possible to weaken your stance the devil wants you to really lose your footing to lose that firmness to lose that confidence in the gospel itself

in uh the the word of god in the bible that god has given you because the devil will tell you i'm sure you already know this i know you do that doctrine doesn't really matter all that much what matters is just that we love each other doesn't matter about being familiar with this doctrine or that doctrine well that's not what chapter 4 is saying to be stable means to be able to set up against the wiles of the devil and not be carried about by every wind of doctrine because there are teachings that will carry us away unless we stand against them how do you stand against them you stand firm by the enabling that the gospel gives you that's why he's mentioning it here as shoes for your feet the readiness the preparedness given by the gospel of peace so it's stability in terms of what you believe it's stability too in how we behave and how we live chapter 4 again verse 17 and on from there you find now this i say 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 alienated from the life of god because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart and they have become callous and so on but that is not the way you learned christ therefore put off your old self and be renewed in your mind and the spirit of your mind put on the new self created in the after the likeness of god and put away falsehood let each of you speak the truth with this neighbor for we are members one of them there's the whole list clear really of the practicalities of the christian life and of christian relationships and that comes through the preparedness the stability that's given by the gospel of peace it's how we live as well because again the devil will actually tell you it's not really all that important to be serious about your christianity just follow as best you can or just take your cue from somebody else and especially the devil will point you to somebody who's perhaps not living up to the standard that ought to be the case so none of us is perfect in that regard but the devil's one of the devil's favorite ploys is to actually persuade us well you're not as bad as so and so you're still okay so just relax some of the best commentaries that we get on these sort of issues come out of the darkness of human suffering and the light that shines out of darkness always seems and is indeed many in many ways brighter for all that that it comes out of the darkness remember job you dig into the book of job which isn't a very easy book to to follow or interpret but there are parts of it that just shine out so brightly out of this man's suffering and agony and the darkness that he's groping in as he looks for answers and solutions to his the grievous providence that's come upon him well in chapter 13 verse 15 you remember these well-known words though he that's god though he slay me i will yet hope in him yet i will argue my ways to his face this will be my salvation that the godless shall not come before him there he is saying here i am i'm not really aware of just why all this has happened to me he's saying but this is one thing i'm doing though god would slay me even if it's the end of my life i will still trust in him i will still hope in him and uh again in chapter 23 he says something uh along the same lines a well-known passage again uh in chapter 23 and verses 10 to 12 where he's been saying of course

down through that chapter uh just i wish i would know where i could find him or that i knew where i might find him is he's searching for god in the midst of this darkness and it's not at all apparent to him just how it's come about or why and his friends have not been any help because all they've said is well just confess your faults and your sin the sin that's caused this to god and job knows it's not for any particular sin that this has come upon him he's bewildered but he said i would lay my case before him i would know what he would answer me all the way through then behold i go forwards but he's not there and backwards but i do not perceive him then verse 10 he comes but 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 he's really saying all this is happening to me and happening around me and happening in my experience but this is something i'm holding on to and i'm determined to hold on to i'm not going to depart from the way of his commandments i'm not going to actually depart from his word that he's taught me that's where i find my stability he's saying so it is with this description in ephesians 6 the stability in what we believe there's stability about how we live and it all has to do with the preparation or the

preparedness the readiness given us by the gospel of peace that's why the gospel is so important to us and so important to share in together it's one of the great blessings of life that we are as we are this evening under the gospel of peace that God is using his gospel his great news as good news in Christ to enable us the stability against the wiles of the devil that we need and to enable us to live as we live as much as we are able to as we find stability in how we behave consistency and stability against the evil suggestions and the schemes of the devil so firstly then there's stability that these shoes the shoes that spiritually are given to the Christian soldier secondly the Roman soldier shoes gave him mobility they were light enough to be able to move just as they had a sufficient grip to enable him to stand so the soldier even today must always think ahead they're taught to think ahead they're taught to think of things that may just be around the corner and to be prepared for them and that's why where Paul is is saying here that the Christian must actually keep up with developments which the enemy will try and keep from you try and actually the developments that take place on a personal level where in your own experience as things move along from day to day and mine is the devil most likely to get an opening where is it that you're most vulnerable where is it that he's seeking an entrance maybe it's not the same today as it was yesterday maybe it's different with you as your experience develops still he's able to find any weaknesses so we have to actually look at how we need to move from one position to the other wherever it's most likely we're going to come under his attack and you can only do that the more you learn of the gospel of peace the more God feeds your soul with the teaching of the gospel so the more you're covering all the areas [20:14] where there might be a need to move quickly in order to thwart the attempts of the evil one and of course prayer comes into that too although that's mentioned later on in verse 18 and not only in a personal level we have to actually also try and think ahead and try and look in our current situation as to what's happening around us not just in the church but also in the wider sense in society and we have to see and move quickly in our relationship with God and in our position in the church and in our relation to the world to move quickly in response to where the devil is actually presently attacking and you can see that for example and you can see that particularly at this time with attempts that are being made in our parliament to introduce assisted suicide and to legalize it placing all kinds of complications in the way and also suggesting to us that this is actually really better for those who are terminally ill and in extreme pain that this is really a better solution than actually having to go on and not even under palliative care well what kind of what kind of source do you think what sort of source is it that brings the suggestion that somehow for somebody even in extreme pain and very difficult though that is to contend with and to watch what kind of source is it that suggests that one form of treatment for that is death it's just ending that life because that's what these proposals actually are doing it's suggesting that it's a valid treatment to bring that life to an end and applying the word treatment and the idea of treatment to such a situation is of course contrary to everything you find in the Bible contrary to everything it's acceptable with God which is why in responding as I hope you will respond we have to emphasize the need to pour in resources into palliative care the wonderful palliative

UK are actually ahead of the field in palliative care and yet there's so few resources compared to what there should be and could be financially that's why those who are experts in palliative care are calling out for this and that advances in pain relief and so on have increased hugely over the past decade or so well there's just one example where you can see there's a movement there and the people of God need to move quickly to offset and overcome and stand against that where you see the schemes of the devil where you see the likes of this proposal to bring people's lives to an end even if it is with their own permission or at their own request it is still suicide it is still a human being taking the choice of ending their own life or assisting somebody to end their life and that's really why we have to have the preparedness of the gospel of peace and you know that's why we have to it's obvious to yourselves

I'm sure it's why we need to pray that more and more people who are committed to the Bible committed to God committed to the values and the principles of the scripture will actually be there at the very outset of movements towards legalizing such things very often we're left to actually play catch up as a church as Christians in society what we really want to see is Christians there where plans are formulated where the influence of Christians would hopefully prevent such plans ever coming into being that's why it's important to have Christians in the political life of our nation and Christians in the medical expertise of our nation everywhere in society where human life is vulnerable the Christian voice has to be heard the Christian voice has to be multiplied has to move

quickly to offset and counteract the movements and the schemes of the devil because the one thing that you will not get in the schemes of the devil is sanctity of life he's all about death all about sin and darkness that's his nature that's how Jesus described him he is a liar he is the father of lies he's the source of untruths and he goes about seeking who he may destroy so he's saying here is God telling us take up this whole armor of God have your feet shod with the preparedness the readiness provided by the gospel of peace and as you do that so you have to be alert to move and move quickly using the resources that God has provided for us sadly in the history of the church we've all too often seen that what we're doing is just fighting old battles fighting battles that have long since gone or enemies that have long since faded away we don't live anymore in the Puritan age and yet we have the same values and the same gospel as they did but society is very different not in essence but in many of the ways in which in which people live their lives and the resources and advantages and technology that's available to them so this constant preparation by the gospel so important keeping us stable but also making us mobile making us alert making us aware of where we need to counteract the workings of the devil and secondly in terms of mobility very briefly there's also as well as an alertness for moving there has to be a willingness to change willingness to change because when the soldier is called to go from one place to another it's a very different thing training somewhere in the UK wherever the terrain may be to actually go into a place like Iraq or Afghanistan and those soldiers who have been on duty they will tell you how very different it is on the battlefield there the conditions are so different everything around it the atmosphere is so different the whole surroundings are so different the requirements are so different they have to be willing to change to fit in with that environment now that's something we need to be also aware of spiritually we keep the gospel intact we do not bargain away the gospel we actually maintain the gospel in its entirety all that wonderful truth that God has given us the good news the gospel of peace we don't actually compromise on any of those

matters that comprise the gospel the gospel of peace how people come to know God how people come to know themselves and their need of God what God has provided us in Jesus Christ how we come to be made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ through faith in Christ the wonderful teachings that have come down to us from not just the Reformation but even before that through from the apostles all the way through to our present day of justification and sanctification and glorification and the need to evangelize and make disciples of all nations all of that that's the gospel we have to hold four square to but the ways in which the gospel is presented to the world from time to time needs adjustment and unfortunately the devil will want to persuade you that all change is bad and that we mustn't be prepared to change at all we just keep things the way they were and we don't change anything not the gospel and not the way we present it to the world well that of course can't stand really can it some people would go so far as to say well we don't really need to go out with the gospel at all

God will change people God will bring people into the church God will convert people well that's not what the woman of Samaria thought as soon as she met Christ by the well and he told her who he was and revealed to her that he was the Messiah she left her water pot the purpose she came to the well really didn't matter anymore at least not as much as this she went to her own townspeople and told them come and see this man who told me everything I did is this not the Christ you find the same with Andrew and Peter what did Andrew do he went and found his brother and took him to Jesus that's what we have to be about as well and the method by which we do that may sometimes need to change society has changed people's views of the gospel have changed in many respects we don't find people anymore coming to church as used to be the case to hear the gospel so there are some things that do need to change and some of the methodology needs to change though we don't actually make that foundation a lot of fundamental importance the gospel itself is what is important you know but the wiles of the devil the schemes of the devil the cleverness of the devil sometimes persuades people that just avoid all change come what may and to actually have any church say that or even come to kind of boast in the idea that look we haven't changed anything in the last 50 years everything is exactly the same as it was well no church can be like that the vibrancy of a church holding on to the gospel presenting the gospel is always looking for ways by which that gospel can be presented to the generation they belong to and in such a way that will effectively use every

[31 : 00] God given means by which the gospel can actually be we reach forth with the gospel to the society we belong to and that too requires us to know the preparedness that comes from the gospel of peace it's as we learn as God teaches us through the gospel how we should go about

things in our day how we should present the gospel to the people of our day what sort of structures are acceptable that weren't in place 50 years ago maybe not even thought of then but there's all sorts of ways by which the presentation of the gospel can change from one generation to another without changing the gospel itself always be aware of people who say you know we don't have the same gospel message that they had 50 years ago that's outdated well that's no use that's not going to really lead to many people's lives being changed for the good but also be aware on the other hand at the other extreme of the suggestion that somehow we just don't change anything and we just leave everything as it was 50 or 100 years ago and just let

God be God here is how we are counseled by God that the gospel of peace prepares us and gives us stability but gives us mobility to the extent that is necessary as God himself shows us as he teaches us increasingly by his spirit those great issues of the gospel of peace so may you and I and may we together increasingly know that stability that the gospel of peace brings us and may we also be very much a more mobile a more mobile church in that sense that we are watchful as to where the devil is most active and immediately prepared to move so as to counter that with God's truth and even if it needs change in certain things and certain ways and methods that we be prepared to do that if it's going to serve the gospel and of course if the changes are acceptable in the teaching of

God himself let's pray Lord our God we pray that your word will be blessed to us again tonight so that we will know more of that provision that you make for us in this great armor that you have given your people to wear help us as we have already been thinking of having to wear the armor to take it up each day to take it up in all its parts to take it up with confidence that it is adequate and sufficient for us to meet all our requirements and bless us Lord as we have been thinking tonight of the way that this gospel of peace prepares your people to face the world prepares them to live with each other prepares them to be sufficiently stable against the wiles of the devil but also to react as required to developments in his strategy grant these mercies to us we pray and hear the prayers of your people we ask it in Jesus name amen let's conclude worship this evening we're singing in psalm 17