

THE ARMOR OF GOD (part 3) Ephesians 6:10-15

Bobby Welsh is a retired pastor and former president of the SBC. He also is a decorated Vietnam veteran who has written a book entitled You, the Warrior Leader. The purpose of the book is to show how military principles may be applied to the work of the church. While I have some problems with the church looking to the military for a model to do her work, I do agree with Welsh's opening statement. He says, "The church is not a passive, milquetoast organization to be tossed about by the whims of a pagan world. But the church is a militant, aggressive army, marching against the enemy. The battle is won. The victory is ours. That is the church. Militant! Aggressive! Victorious!". And Welsh is exactly right. We **do** have an enemy, Satan, and we **are** in a battle, a battle for the souls of men and the glory of God in this universe, and we **know** that we are going to win in the end. As we've said before, we've read the last chapter of the Book and it assures us of victory.

But the promise of victory is when Jesus comes again. But in the meantime, local churches are closing their doors by the thousands each year because they've lost their battle. Thirty years ago an Anglican priest named David Watson made an observation that Bobby Welsh says has haunted him ever since. Watson said, "It is widely held that the battle of the century will be between Marxism, Islam, and Third World Christianity. Western Christianity is considered too weak and ineffective to contribute anything significant to this universal struggle". Friends, true or not, that should break all of our hearts!! That our faith in the West is so anemic that some perceive it makes no difference in a world that is steamrolling to hell. But for many believers that's the way it is. No power, no joy, no victory, and worst of all, satisfied with their miserable, wretched situation.

But it doesn't have to be that way! And as we've been studying for the last few weeks, God has given you and me a battle plan that insures our victory over the devil not only at the end of the age, but every day. And it is as we put on the whole armor of God. Two weeks ago we talked about putting on the belt of truth, which is saturating ourselves with the Word of God. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). And this is foundational. No belt of truth, no hope of ever winning any spiritual battles. So beloved, I exhort you again today, read the Word, meditate on the Word, and yes, have a plan for memorizing the Word. And do it every day.

Last week we discussed putting on the breastplate of righteousness, which is living a righteous life. And we concluded that it is not within us to do this, that the

only way we will ever live righteously is to do what Paul exhorted the saints in Rome to do, which is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14). And just as we were saved by faith we must clothe ourselves in Christ's righteousness by faith, but we must do it every day.

Today we are going to look at a third piece of armor for the Christian soldier, so turn in your Bibles, please, to Ephesians 6:10-15.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 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 girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Ephesians 6:10-15 (KJV)

Paul says that we are to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Now, it is not surprising that Paul would mention the footwear of the Roman soldier as one of the analogies of the Christian's armor. For in the course of a soldier's duties a good pair of shoes meant all the difference in the world. Good shoes meant comfort in marching long distances. But this was by no means the only criteria for a good pair of soldier shoes. Good shoes meant firm footing in the heat of the battle. Good shoes meant protection when climbing over jagged ledges or trampling through thorns and thistles, good shoes meant stability when wading through streams with slippery rock beds. And the ancient historian Josephus describes the Roman soldier's shoes as being "thickly studded with sharp nails" to enhance all of these other functions. The Romans made it a priority for their soldiers to have the best shoes Rome could produce.

But just as the Roman soldier had good shoes, so must the soldiers in God's army. But what does Paul mean when he says that our shoes are the "preparation of the gospel of peace?" Well, first of all let's define the word "preparation". Its basic meaning is "readiness". Being ready for the fight. Paul says in Titus 3:1, "Remind (Christians) to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, and to be ready for every good work". And it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know the importance of being ready to fight if you are a soldier. If the enemy is better prepared than you are, if he is in better condition physically, if he is better equipped, and if he has a better battle plan, the enemy is going to whip you! Oh, but this is not the case with those who put

on the armor of God. They are more ready than their enemy could ever be, for they ready themselves for the battle with the gospel of peace.

So as we enter our spiritual battles we need make ourselves ready by strapping on our feet the gospel of peace. But what is this “gospel of peace?” There are different ideas among the scholars. Some say that at least part of the meaning is that the gospel of peace is the shoes of evangelism, that Paul is giving us his version of the Great Commission. For the Bible does say in Isaiah 52:7, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tiding of good things, who proclaims salvation...”

But I, along with others, do not believe that this is what Paul is saying here. He tells us in this passage to stand, having your feet shod with the gospel of peace. We are to stand against every flaming arrow that hell shoots at us without flinching. The heart crushing death of a child, a devastating divorce, the loss of a job, the betrayal of a trusted friend, whatever it may be. And we stand because our souls are flooded with the peace of God. We know that God is our Almighty Father Who loves us and Who has said, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31) We take our unflinching stand with David, who said, “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around” (Psalm 3:6). And we are not afraid because God has given us His peace which Philippians 4:7 says passes all understanding. It is so profound it makes no sense at all to the world.

Let me show you how you can have this peace of God in your life today. Turn to Acts 27. The context is Paul’s journey by ship to Rome. If you’ve read this passage you know that it was a perilous trip. They experienced horrible weather almost from the beginning. The storms were so bad when they were out in the middle of the Mediterranean they began to throw overboard whatever they could to lighten the ship lest it sink. And verse 20 says that after many days of seeing neither the sun nor the stars, all 276 people in the ship gave up hope of surviving, all that is, except one. And you know who that was. But Paul did not give up hope because he got a word from God. I want you to look beginning at verse 22, where he shares this word with all the others aboard.

Paul told them in verse 24, “An angel told me not to be afraid because God was going to save my life and also save all of your lives”. But the angel’s message itself was not the foundation of Paul’s peace. We see his foundation of peace in verse 23, where he said, “I saw an angel tonight, sent by the God whom I belong and whom I serve”. **That** was the source of Paul’s peace. He knew that he belonged to God! And he knew that he was in the will of God. And brother, when you know that you are saved and that you are living in obedience to God there is nothing that Satan can

ever do or say that can shake you. For you know that you are in God's protective hand and you are as safe as the saints in His hand in Heaven. And when the battle is over and the smoke has cleared, a thousand may have fallen at your side, but you will be standing firm and standing tall, waiting for the next attack!

I ask you this morning, do you have this peace in your heart? When the enemy comes in like a flood, does the Spirit of God in your heart raise up a standard against him? (Isaiah 59:19) Or as the gospel song says, do you live from fear to fear, the greatest fear being the fear of death? If you do, I tell you that there is only one way to rid yourself of these crippling fears. And that is give them to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace!! Admit to Him that you are a sinner, admit to Him that you are worthy of nothing but eternal death in hell. Turn from your sins as best you know how and trust Him alone to be your Savior and the Supreme Ruler of your life. And here is His promise to all who do: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.....Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). He will give you His marvelous peace today.

Some of you are already saved but you still don't have His peace from day to day. And that's because you are not living under His lordship. You are living your own life, trusting in your own strength, and when troubles come you come apart just like the unsaved do. You need to repent of your sins and come back to Him today, and receive His forgiveness and peace. Then you'll stand firm in the midst of your storms, and He will be glorified in your life. Whatever your need, won't you come to Jesus with it today?