

I. Introduction

- A. I have good news for you today.
 - 1. Good news in the craziness of life. Good news in the busy-ness of life. Good news in the pressures of life. Good news for every monster in your life.
- B. And that good news is found in our main Bible verse for today which is:
 - 1. *"Stand firm... having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."* (Ephesians 6:15)
- C. There's the good news, and it's my job to put all this together.
- D. My message today is part of a longer series. It's a series we began last year. The series is called The Christian In Complete Armor. And yes, it is a series about spiritual warfare.
- E. My talk today is part 9 in the series. My title is:
 - 1. **The Boots of the Gospel**
- F. In this place in the Bible, God reminds us that earth is a battlefield. There is a war raging in the invisible world of the heavenlies, and it spills over into this earthly realm every single day.
 - 1. It is a war between God and the devil, angels and demons, truth and deception, heaven and hell.
- G. And there's no avoiding it. So this paragraph actually begins with a warning:
 - 1. *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."* (Ephesians 6:12)
- H. The secular mind knows nothing of this. They are completely out of touch with that vast domain of the heavenlies, the invisible spiritual realm that surrounds us all the time and pervades this created order. They do not know this. They scoff at this. They mock us for believing it. But as God's people, we know there is more to life than meets the eye. And we believe that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the perfect revelation of things unseen that impact our lives all the time.
- I. So, all the world is locked in the cosmic conflict of the ages. It is demonic. It is satanic. It is dirty. You're in it. I'm in it.
- J. That's why we need the armor of God.
 - 1. *"Therefore, take up the full armor [panoplia] of God, so that you will be able to resist on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."* (Ephesians 6:13)
- K. Here it is, this awesome armor of God. Perfect. Powerful. Invincible. It is a gift of grace to you, so that you can stand in victory.
- L. Through Jesus and his grace, you can thrive. Even on the most evil, difficult, troubled day of your life. That doesn't mean you won't be sad. It doesn't erase fear or anger or all the normal emotions of being human in this world. It doesn't erase suffering or loss. But the grace of God does put a floor underneath that, and sets you on a foundation that is rock solid.
- M. So here is your panoply, your complete armor from heaven.
 - 1. *"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;"* (Ephesians 6:14-17)
- N. These are taken from the armor of a Roman soldier. St Paul, who made this list, is very familiar with this, because he was in Roman custody on his way to trial before Caesar. He saw these soldiers all day long. And he saw them put on and take off their armor countless times.
 - 1. **The Belt of Truth**
 - 2. **The Breastplate of Righteousness**
 - 3. **The Boots of the Gospel**
 - 4. **The Shield of Faith**
 - 5. **The Helmet of Salvation**
 - 6. **The Sword of the Spirit which is Word of God**
 - 7. **Prayer**

O. This is the Christian in complete armor. So, let's suit up.

P. Like I said, this is part 9. So far we've talked about spiritual warfare, Satan and the devil, footholds, strongholds, casting down strongholds, the nature of the armor (it's a holy stronghold) and the first two pieces of armor.

1. You can catch up with all the previous parts in video, audio, or print... on our website and our YouTube channel.

Q. Today, we're on the third piece of armor which is the Boots of the Gospel. So let's focus on that now.

II. Boots of the Gospel

- A. **"Stand firm... having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;"** (Ephesians 6:15)
- B. This is considered the most complicated piece of armor to understand. You think Paul would have simply said, put on your boots of the gospel. But he says to put on your boots of the preparation of the gospel of peace.
 - 1. Let me be a professor for a minute. It says, **"the preparation of the gospel of peace."**
 - 2. For the grammatical among us... you see the word "of" twice.
 - (1) Preparation of... gospel of... In Greek grammar, this is called a genitive, and there are a lot of ways this grammatical construction is used. Here, we have 2 of those ways.
 - b) The first "of" here is a genitive of source: the preparation that comes from the source of... the gospel.
 - c) The second "of" is a genitive of substance: the gospel which is, in essence, a message of peace.
- C. End of grammar lesson. So he is basically saying that this piece of armor bolts together 3 pieces.
 - 1. Preparation... which comes from... Gospel... which is a message of... Peace.
- D. Let's take those one at a time, and then put them together.

III. Preparation

- A. The Greek word here, which is *hetoimasia*, can go in two directions.

- B. One direction says the idea is that you should ready with the gospel, ready to share Christ, ready to evangelize.
1. All of that is true, and important, and good. If you know me, I love this. I'm all about evangelism, and I'm all about putting churches on an evangelistic footing.
 2. It's not happening in American churches like it should be happening. We need to get people saved.
 3. Which makes me super happy to tell you about something in our family of churches. We belong to the Christian and Missionary Alliance. And our local district has just had some meetings... and I wasn't there, but pastor Tim was. And as of this month, for the first time ever, the number one priority for about 100 local churches in our district is evangelism. That makes me so happy. It's the first time in 20 years it's been Priority One. So I'm all about that.
 4. But that's not what this verse is about.
- C. The preparation of the gospel of peace is not about evangelizing lost people.
- D. **PREPARATION: The preparation of the gospel of peace is about energizing saved people.**
- E. It's not the preparation that comes *for* the preaching gospel. It's the preparation that comes *from you really embracing the gospel*.
1. If you know the gospel inside and out, you are ready for the fight. You have a readiness whatever this morally broken world throws at you.
 - a) You are ready *mentally*, because you know the truths that set you free and keep you free and make you strong.
 - b) You are ready *psychologically*, because the promises of God have seeped down from your mind into your emotions, bringing healing, and deliverance, and victory, and strength.
 - (1) When you know the gospel inside and out...
 - c) You are ready *spiritually*, because grace puts muscle on your faith and courage in your heart.
- F. Back in the days when David faced Goliath, David had a secret weapon, and it wasn't his slingshot or five smooth stones.
- G. His secret weapon was that he had something in his soul that none of his brothers, and none of the other soldiers, had.
- H. David stood before that giant, nine feet tall, and shouted, "Who is the uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" What did he have in his heart?
1. He knew who he was... he was a soldier in the armies of the living God.
 2. He knew who his enemy was... this uncircumcised Philistine, meaning a secular, godless opponent of God.
 3. He knew who God was... the living God. The one and only. The source of everything good.
- I. David's secret weapon was the preparation of the gospel of peace.
- J. **PREPARATION: The secret weapon of a victorious Christian is a mindset made ready for the fight by prolonged exposure to the grace of God.**
1. This is why David could face Goliath, and all the others couldn't. He had strapped on footwear that none of the others did.
 2. Here's a man in a battle... against a monster, a giant, something too big to handle.
 3. And here we are... you're in that same battle.... Against that same monster, that same giant. It's more than you can handle.
 - a) The devil hits you from every angle he can...
 - (1) He'll make you think everybody else thinks you're stupid.
 - (2) He'll remind you of past mistakes till you obsess over them.
 - (3) He'll discourage you with troubles and lie that they're God's fault.
 - (4) He'll tempt you in areas he knows you're already weak... so here come food addictions, sex addictions, porn addictions, drug, alcohol, gambling, shopping addictions. The devil hits you where you're weak.
 - (5) He'll drive a wedge between you and your spouse.
 - (6) He'll convince you you're damaged goods. Or...
 - (7) He'll persuade you you're an angel who never fell and you're so perfect and entitled and everybody owes you.
 - (8) He'll roar like a lion, bellow like a giant, hiss like a serpent, or seduce like an angel.
 - (9) When you climb up into your dignity and dominion, the devil will con your own team to pull you back down to their limp, wimpy, risk-averse safe zone.
 - (a) The devil hits you from every angle.
 - b) **PREPARATION: A Triumphant Spirit is unshakable faith built up by continually hearing and studying the love of God in the Grace of Christ.**
 - (1) You live in a world of troubles. And the only way to "glory in tribulations" as the Bible says, is if the love of God has been poured out in your heart (Romans 5:5).
 - (2) You need to hear about the love of God over and over again.
 - (3) About the grace of God over and over again.
 - (4) About the Cross of Christ, over and over again.
 - (5) About the unsearchable riches of Christ over and over again.
 - (a) So much preaching and so much teaching is about the duties and requirements and obligations of the faith...
 - (b) So much about signs and wonders and new revelations and encounters and experience...
 - (c) And so very little about Jesus and his blood-bought love.
 4. If your heart isn't rooted and grounded in the love of God...
 - a) If your soul isn't stabilized by grace... If your mind isn't informed of the intricate interlocking truths of Christ. If your troubled past isn't delivered and healed under grace... And if your dominion isn't fortified by a prolonged and continuous exposure to the magnificent edifice of truth called grace...
 - (1) Then for every Goliath that comes your way, you'll be back there in the tents with David's scaredy cat brothers, making excuses and blaming others and shivering with fright.

(2) Or you'll be over there with crazy King Saul, alternating between bullying and some kind of denial over and over again.

5. When Paul said to strap on the preparation... dot, dot dot... he meant a TRIUMPHANT SPIRIT. He meant an energy and a confidence and a calmness that can only come from one source:

IV. The Gospel

- A. Gospel... Greek word: *evangelion* (the g is hard and the accent is on the fourth syllable). Take the word for good and mash it into the word for news, and you get this word. Good News.
- B. Gospel is a theological word with a technical meaning.
- C. I think the most clarifying name of the gospel comes from the lips of Paul speaking to pastors in Ephesus as he's on his way to death. Paul called it "the gospel of the grace of God" and that is what it is (Acts 20:24). So what is this Gospel of Grace?
 1. **GOSPEL: The Gospel is the love of God reaching out to prodigals and forgiving them, washing them, blessing them (enriching them), and bringing them home... all without the slightest compromise to his own holiness.**
 - a) Under the gospel of grace the *love* of God is fulfilled, because the closest possible relationship of accession and care is created between you and your Maker. This is the Love of God.
 - (1) But also under grace — and you will only find this in biblical Christianity — no other religion or even philosophy has this...
 - b) Also under the gospel of grace God's *Holiness* is fulfilled because every moral failure is punished and cleansed by sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross... So justice and grace meet at the Cross.
 - c) So Romans 3:26 says God is both just (that's his holiness) AND the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (that's his grace).
 2. **GOSPEL: The Gospel is the work of God alone through the finished work of the Cross of Christ.**
 - a) There is no grace apart from the death of Jesus and the blood he shed. Whatever had to happen to bring a sinner back to God — you, me, anybody — whatever had to happen actually did happen the day Jesus died.
 - b) He suffered. He carried our sins. He absorbed all the punishment. Whatever condemnation our sins deserved, whatever, whatever justice, whatever anything, Jesus himself took into himself on the Cross and paid the price in full.
 - (1) God forbid that I should post except in the Cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14).
 - c) The gospel is exclusive. It excludes everything else. It's Jesus or it's nothing.
 - d) And here's a key element of the Gospel...
 3. **GOSPEL: The Gospel is the gift of God and cannot coexist with any human effort whatsoever.**
 - a) So...
 - (1) No good works. No morality. No sacrifice. No obedience. No religion. No ritual. No effort. No payment. No improvement. No performance. No character. No virtue. No nothing. No repentance. No following. No nothing.
 - (a) Not one speck of any human virtue can mix with finished work of Jesus Christ.
 - b) To suggest that you can add even the tiniest droplet to what Jesus did on the Cross is to insult the Savior and devalue the work of Christ.
 - c) No. The gospel we preach is Christ alone. And the test of the validity of the gospel is exactly this. What does it make of Jesus Christ and him crucified? Is he part of it or is he all.
 - d) And we at Pathway will declare till our dying breath, that he is all the gospel we need, now and forevermore.
 - (1) So...
 4. **GOSPEL: The Gospel is the call of God to all the world to turn from every other hope to faith alone in Christ alone to bring you back to God.**
 - a) For by grace you are saved through faith. (Eph 2:8)
 - b) Therefore a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. (Rom 3:20).
 - c) We have the righteousness which is from God by faith. (Php 3:9)
 - d) Faith is the only thing a human can do that isn't a work. No merit badge goes to faith, because faith pins the merit badge on the Person you're believing in.
 - e) Faith is not a work. Faith is an unwork.
 - f) And so the Gospel is the Good News that you can end your striving, end your working, end your sweating and straining and worries and fear.
 - g) Trust in Jesus is all it takes. It's as easy as ABC.
 - (1) Admit you need a Savior. Believe Jesus is the One. Choose to put your faith in him.
 - h) There are two errors that make my head explode when it comes to teaching and preaching the gospel.
 - (1) The first error is when the message doesn't mention the Cross of Christ. Without the death of Christ, you're not hearing the gospel. This is a fatal flaw.
 - (2) The second error is when the message demands that the sinner carries even a fraction of the burden for their own salvation.
 - (a) So many Christian cliches propagate this error.
 - (b) It's not the gospel to give your life to Christ. The Gospel is that Christ gave his life for you. He's the giver; you're the receiver.
 - (c) It's not the gospel to surrender your life to Christ. In the Gospel, he surrendered his life to the nails of Calvary's Cross.
 - (d) It's not the gospel to repent and be a different person. That's a burden no one can bear. In the Gospel the only thing you repent of is the delusion you can make yourself a better person who is good enough for God.

(e) It's not the gospel that you give, do, surrender, dedicate, serve, obey, or follow anyone, anywhere, anyhow. How is any of that good news? The Good news is that Jesus is following you with goodness and mercy all the days of your life, and if you put your faith in him, you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

- i) It's faith, faith, faith, faith, faith. It's faith plus nothing, in the matchless Gospel of the Grace of God.
- j) In every battle, with every giant, and in every demonic assault, you simply fall back into the arms of grace and see the salvation of the Lord.
- k) Even when the giant hurled his insults at David, David shouted forth one of the greatest statements of grace in all of Scripture.
 - (1) *"Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear [human effort]; for the battle is the LORD's..."* (1 Samuel 17:47)
 - (2) The work is the Lord's. Salvation is the Lord's. Forgiveness is the Lord's. Your entry to heaven belongs to the Lord.
- l) And when Paul wanted to point to the one thing that would give your feet a firm footing, and prepare you to stand, to not lose it, and to not lose hope, he compared those boots to the precious gospel of the Grace of God. The preparation arises from gospel alone.
- m) But there's one more element to make your boots complete. It's the preparation of the gospel of peace.

D. Peace

- 1. If you could bottle peace and sell it, you'd be the richest person in history.
- 2. The word in Greek is *eirene* (eye-RAY-nay) and in Hebrew is *shalom*. It includes the absence of strife, but it means so much more. It's a really big word, and it includes wholeness, abundance, health, prosperity, joy, and happiness, and everything a person would ever want. This is the life. Peace is true life. Peace is real life.
- 3. And it begins with peace with God. That's the first thing and the main thing. Two verses here:
 - a) *Our pre-saved condition: "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled"* (Colossians 1:21)
 - b) *Our saved condition: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* (Romans 5:1)
- 4. All peace starts here. There is an anxiety, and an unsettledness in the heart until you have made peace with God. This is why the unbelieving world is so chaotic. The whole world is easy prey for Satan, because the whole world is in rebellion against God.
- 5. It's not just that they're not saved, they are alienated from God. They are enemies in their minds by wicked works.
- 6. As we all were until we saw the Cross and received the Savior.
 - a) **PEACE: The deepest peace starts with peace with God through saving faith in Christ.**
- 7. Do you want stability in your life? Make peace with God. Because that the start of a peaceful heart in the midst of all the battles of your life.
- 8. This month of January marks my anniversary as a pastor. I stepped into full time Christian pastoral ministry in January. This month, I'm starting year number 45 as a pastor. It shocks me that I'm still in this, because I've never seen myself as worthy.
- 9. But I know my worthiness is of the Lord. To God be the glory. He has qualified me (Colossians 1:12). And I do believe I've got a lot more years in me. I don't feel even close to being done, Lord willing. But, I've seen a few things over these years. Working in church ministry concentrates a lot that's beautiful and a lot that's chaotic too.
 - a) We hear all the good stuff in thousands of people's lives. All the engagements come to us. All the weddings. The much-wanted pregnancies and births. The answered prayers. The good news and healings. Days and years of sobriety. We hear that good news a lot.
 - b) But we also hear bad news a lot. We hear of all the struggles and chaos and bad stuff too. We actually hear the bad stuff more. Pray for this sickness. For this shattered marriage. These messed up children. This evil boss. This demonic attack. We hear of Addictions. Infidelities. Struggles. We're told of so much sadness. So much depression... We hear too many times the ultimate heartbreak of those desperate souls who have ended their own lives at their own hands...
 - (1) and I have to say there is hope for you, and there is good news for you, no matter how low you've sunk. Promise me you'll ask for help.
- 10. Church life concentrates the bad stuff. I've been taking in these stories now for 45 years. And we want that. We want to hear that. We want to come alongside you. We want to bring grace and healing and peace to you by setting you on the truth.
- 11. But here is what I have seen over and over again.
 - a) **PEACE: The deepest peace in every category belongs those who are deeply rooted and grounded in the love of God and in his matchless grace.**
- 12. True mental health, is set on the foundation of the gospel of the grace of God.
- 13. And that is why in the spiritual battle, we have to strap on the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

E. Conclusion

- 1. **"Stand firm... having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." (Ephesians 6:15)**
- 2. The difference between people who collapse and lose it, versus people who grieve and mourn and suffer with dignity and hope, is exactly this.
- 3. And every time a giant comes, after the initial shock, you can reach into a grace that goes from the top of your heads to the soles of your feet, and the say with certainty, Who is this uncircumcised Philistine to defy a soldier of the living God? I will not fear, for The Battle Is the Lord's.