

The Christian Life (27): Sanctification (Part 12)

Having considered the belt of truth and breastplate of righteousness, we come this morning to the shoes of peace. "To suppose that a Christian is to be motionless as a post, and inanimate as a stone, is altogether a mistake. A true believer is an active person, he has feet, and uses them. And thus these must be protected" (Spurgeon).¹

I. The Shoes of Peace

1. *What are they?* "And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph.6:15). The word "shod" is an old English word meaning "to fit with a shoe." The word rendered "preparation" literally means "readiness or preparedness." "The language is used metaphorically to signify that those who are properly equipped with God's armor have their feet fitted, prepared, and ready in their spiritual warfare" (O'Brien).² Thus the phrase "with the preparation of the gospel of peace" refers to a readiness that comes from the gospel. This is brought out by the ESV, "and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace." Technically speaking, our shoes are not made out of the gospel of peace, but the readiness or preparedness that comes from the gospel of peace ('having your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace' NIV). "The general sense is: ready, eager courage that is due to the gospel which fills us with the peace of God. The context does not support the idea of invading the territory of the enemy, taking the gospel among men in order to snatch them away from the devil. The feet are sandaled for the wicked day, for the battle with the demon host" (Lenski).³ "As the gospel secures our peace with God, and gives the assurance of His favor, it produces that joyful readiness of mind which is essential to success in the spiritual conflict. All doubt tends to weakness, and despair is death" (Hodge).⁴ "The apostle is dealing here with one thing only, namely our fight and conflict with the devil. His whole object is to enable us to stand against the whiles of the devil. He is not thinking of evangelizing, he is picturing a Christian who is being attacked night and day by the devil and all these powers. It is a defensive warfare" (MLJ).⁵ "It is an error on the part of many expositors, to represent the meaning thus—'preparation to preach or publish the gospel of peace,' for it is of defensive amor alone the apostle is now speaking" (Eadie).⁶ "What matchless material for girding the pilgrim's foot is that which is here mentioned, namely, the peace which comes from the gospel, the preparation of heart and life, which springs from a full knowledge, reception, and experience of the gospel in our souls" (Spurgeon).⁷

What is the meaning of the word preparation? Some explain it as an injunction to be prepared for preaching the gospel; but it is the effect of the gospel which I consider to be expressed by this term. We are enjoined to lay aside every hinderance, and to be prepared both for journey and for war. By nature we dislike exertion and lack agility. A rough road and many other obstacles hinder our progress and we are discouraged by the smallest annoyance. On these accounts, Paul holds out the gospel as the fittest means for undertaking and performing the expedition.⁸

¹ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, 11:487

² Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 476

³ R.C.H. Lenski, *Interpretation of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, 667

⁴ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, 284

⁵ Martyn-Llyod Jones, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 7:274

⁶ John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*, 469

⁷ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, 11:489

⁸ John Calvin, *Commentary*, 21:339

By "gospel of peace" is meant the good news that brings peace with God, peace of conscience, and peace with man. By "peace with God" is meant reconciliation with God. Peace in the courtroom of heaven. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom.5:1). By "peace of God" is meant the soul's reflection upon our peace with God. Its peace in the courtroom of the heart. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:7). Peace with God is objective and perfect, whereas peace of God is subjective and imperfect. The first never changes, the second grows strong and weak. The peace of God is the soul's knowledge and assurance that they have peace with God. Thus, it's possible for a person to be at peace with God and yet lack the peace of God. And yet, it's the responsibility of every Christian to possess and pursue a stronger sense of the peace of God (they are to have their spiritual feet shod with the readiness that comes from the peace of God). "The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace" (Num.6:24-26). "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Rom.15:13). "May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure" (1Pet.1:2). "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col.3:15). "Flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace" (1Tim.2:22). "Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way" (2Thess.3:16). In each of these verses, the peace referenced refers to the peace of God as Christians already possess peace with God. The latter is perfect and cannot be improved, the former is imperfect and must be protected and pursued. We are to shod our spiritual feet with the readiness that comes from the knowledge and assurance that we have, through Christ, peace with God. "The possession of peace with God creates blessed serenity of heart, and confers upon the mind peculiar and continuous preparedness of action and movement. There is nothing to trouble it or divide its energies" (Eadie).⁹

All believers are equally partakers of this peace, that is, as far as their state and the veracity of this matter are concerned. The application of this peace, however, varies greatly as far as its sensible enjoyment is concerned. Some enjoy it in a greater measure and others in a lesser measure. Some remain in this peaceful condition for a long period, and so to speak live in it; others experience this peace rarely and it rapidly dissipates.¹⁰

2. *Why are they important?* "A good soldier needs proper footwear. The Roman soldiers, with whom Paul was well acquainted, wore sandals with strong straps. The sandals were thickly studded with sharp nails, which kept the soldiers from slipping. Footwear was critical for righting" (Beeke).¹¹ "These boots were made of leather, left the toes free, had heavy studded soles, and were tied to the ankles and shins with more or less ornamental straps. They equipped the soldier for long marches and for a solid stance. While they did not impede his mobility, they prevented his foot from slipping" (Stott).¹² "A Roman soldier's footwear was important for two reasons. First, the studs on the soles provided protection against slipping and sliding. Christians are always in danger of slipping and sliding! Second, the studded soles gave the soldier mobility. Because he had good shoes, the soldier could move freely and quickly in the roughest terrain" (Hamilton).¹³ "When all is quiet within, and the quarrel is taken up between God and us, we can the better bear the frowns of the world. And he calls it the gospel of peace, because it mainly

⁹ John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*, 469

¹⁰ Wilhelmus a Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, 2:442

¹¹ Joel Beeke, *Striving Against Satan*, 48

¹² John Stott, *Ephesians*, 279

¹³ Ian Hamilton, *Ephesians*, 273

depends on the terms of grace revealed to us in the gospel. He calls it also the preparation, because this peace breeds a firm and ready resolution to go through all difficulties, crosses, and hardships" (Manton).¹⁴

(1) They provide stability. "Without the right footwear, a Christian will slip and slide to defeat. The gospel of peace is the pair of sandals with studs that enables the Christian to put his feet down and stand firm in battle" (Beeke).¹⁵ These shoes give us "firmness, confidence, and a sense of assurance" (MLJ).¹⁶

They give the ability to trust God regardless of what the day may bring. "Fountain of grace, full and free, what need I, that is not in thee? Full pardon, strength to meet the day, and peace which none can take away."¹⁷ "The peace is in the heart but shows itself in the readiness of the feet. Peace has been made ours by this precious gospel, so that the courage in our hearts makes our feet march with victorious steadiness and courage into the hostile hosts in order to scatter them in defeat" (Lenski).¹⁸ Few things bring stability and strength to the soul than the peace of God. It provides a readiness or preparedness to face anything a day may bring. If God is with me then who can be against me. "A soul at perfect peace with God is in a fit state for the severest movements. A sense of pardoned sin, and reconciliation with God, fits us for anything and everything. When the burden of sin is gone, all other burdens are light. Since we are no longer on the road to hell, the roughest places of pilgrimage do not distress us" (Spurgeon).¹⁹

The best way to stand up to the devil is to have the clearest possible understanding of the gospel and to experience gospel peace that passes all understanding through the blood of Christ. Our identity, comfort, and stability depend on knowing the gospel intellectually and experientially. Then you can look Satan in the eye, and say, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' You can say with assurance that 'the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly' (Rom.16:20).²⁰

The gospel of peace gives the believer security against the devil's assaults (Rom.5:1). It is from the sure foundation of the gospel of peace that we wage warfare against the kingdom of darkness and its evil prince. When the enemy presses hard against God's people, when we find ourselves cast down, what defense do we have? The sure defense of the gospel of peace. Because God has justified us in Christ, we are at peace with Him, and nothing and no one can take that blood-secured peace away. Peace with God is the first and foundational blessing of the gospel. Because Christ Himself is our peace (Eph.2:14), the gospel makes us impregnable and unimpeachable.²¹

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Jn.14:27). The peace of God keeps our hearts from being troubled or fearful. It gives us confidence and assurance. It provides stability in an unstable and uncertain world. "If you are engaged in a mortal conflict with a powerful, wily, nimble adversary, you must guard against falling and slipping and sliding, by making sure that you are well shod. That is important in all

¹⁴ Thomas Manton, *Works*, 9:215

¹⁵ Joel Beeke, *Striving Against Satan*, 48

¹⁶ Martyn-Llyod Jones, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 7:275

¹⁷ Hymn 591

¹⁸ R.C.H. Lenski, *Interpretation of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, 668

¹⁹ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, 11:494

²⁰ Joel Beeke, *Striving Against Satan*, 48

²¹ Ian Hamilton, *Ephesians*, 274

kinds of physical conflict; and it is even more important in the spiritual realm. You must be quite sure that you know what you are doing, and where you are standing. You must not suddenly find everything slipping from under your feet because your feet have not got a firm grip" (MLJ).²²

(2) They provide protection. Strong and sturdy shoes protect the bottom of our feet from all forms of potential harm and danger. "A very familiar device in warfare in those days was to place certain traps in the ground. They would chisel a piece of wood to a point, then fix it into the ground with the sharp point sticking up – when an enemy came running along, if his feet were not properly protected, these spikes would penetrate the sole of his feet, causing great pain, and perhaps even put the soldier entirely out of action" (MLJ).²³ The "sharp sticks and rocks" over which Christian soldiers must march are the trials and tribulations of this world. The Christian soldier must walk over the hot desert sands of this world, filled with the jagged rocks of mistreatment. The readiness that comes from the gospel of peace protects us from such things. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isa.43:2). "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn.16:33). "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:7).

These gospel shoes are also an effectual preservative from all the ordinary roughnesses of the road of life. He who expects to find a grassy walk all the way to heaven well mown and rolled, or looks for a highway levelled by a steam-roller, will be sorrowfully mistaken. The way is rugged and oftentimes so narrow and so far on high that the eagle's eye cannot discern it; the blood of former pilgrims stains the way to glory; yet from all perils to our feet the preparation of the gospel of peace will guard us, from fears within and fightings without gospel peace will surely deliver us. Perhaps we are more vexed with little trials than with great ones, certainly we bear them with far less composure; but a peaceful heart protects alike from tiny thorns and terrible rocks. Everyday vexations as well as extraordinary tribulations we shall bear cheerfully when the peace of God keeps our heart and mind.²⁴

The man whose feet are well shod fears no ways, but goes through thick and thin, foul or fair, stones or straws; all are alike to him that is well shod; while the barefooted man, or slenderly shod, shrinks when he feels the wet, and shrieks when he lights on a sharp stone. Thus, when the will and heart of a man is prompt, and ready to do any work, the man is, as it were shod and armed against all trouble and difficulty which he is to go over in the doing of it. He makes nothing of afflictions, yea persecutions, but goes singing over them. David was never so merry as in the cave (Ps.57). And how came he so? 'My heart is prepared, my heart is prepared,' saith he, 'I will sing and give praise' (v7). If David's heart had not been shod with this preparation, he would not have liked the way he was in so well.²⁵

²² Martyn-Llyod Jones, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 7:275

²³ Martyn-Llyod Jones, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 7:274

²⁴ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, 11:495

²⁵ William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armor*, 1:560

(3) They provide endurance. By this I mean, they enable the soldier to endure through the hot sands of this world. Especially in olden days, armies had to march long distances to engage the enemy in battle. "A very important reason for Julius Caesar's success as a general was the fact that his men wore military shoes that made it possible for them to cover long distances in such short periods of time" (Beeke).²⁶ Not only do Christian soldiers need shoes to protect them from harm, but they also need shoes that will last. "And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet" (Deut.29:5). As the LORD miraculously preserved their sandals from wearing out, so He will ensure ours, though they may grow thin, will never totally wear out. We will continue to the end. Strength and motivation will come from the readiness or preparedness that comes from the gospel of peace. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things" (Rom.8:32). That is, all things to endure to the end. "But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Heb.12:1)" (Isa.40:31). Though they grow tired and weary they shall never faint. "A comfortable hope of our acceptance and reconciliation in Him, is, I apprehend, that 'preparation of the gospel of peace,' which, for its continual use and application, the apostle compares to shoes, which, whoever wears, shall walk safely and surely through the thorny and rugged paths of our present pilgrimage" (Newton).²⁷

3. *How are they put on?* (1) Repent from all that hinders peace. Honestly seek the cause or causes of unrest within your soul. "Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble" (Ps.119:165). Peace ordinarily accompanies evangelical obedience to God's law. Unconfessed sin hinders a felt-sense of our pardon. "When Christians abate their fervency, God abates their peace. If you slacken the strings of a violin the music is spoiled; so, if Christians slack in duty they spoil the sweet music of peace in their souls. As the fire decays, the cold increases; so, as fervency in duty abates our peace cools" (Watson).²⁸ "Gospel peace is given to the soul in a way of obedience and in a way of duty" (Gurnall).²⁹ As there is no peace for the wicked (Isa.48:22), so the blessing of peace is reserved for the righteous (Gal.5:22-23).

If you would have peace, make war with sin. Sin is the Achan that troubles us. If you would have peace with God, break the league with sin; give battle to sin, for it is a most just war. God has proclaimed it: nay, He has promised us victory. 'Sin shall not have dominion' (Rom.6:14). No way to peace but by maintaining a war with sin. 'Our peace is a war against the Devil' (Tertullian). When Samson had slain the lion, there came honey out of the lion; so by slaying sin, we get the honey of peace.³⁰

(2) Hide yourself in the attributes of the God of peace. Remember in and through Christ God is for you. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You"—whose mind is fixed on God (Isa.26:3). Every attribute of God ought to be viewed as a mountain which surrounds and protects the city and people of God. This was symbolized in the physical city of Jerusalem which is surrounded by mountains that serve as a natural bearer. "As the mountains surround Jerusalem (city of peace), so the LORD surrounds His people" (Ps.125:2). God's NC Jerusalem, the church of Christ, is the true city of peace, as she is surrounded by God's mighty attributes. His power, mercy, grace, love, faithfulness, un-

²⁶ Joel Beeke, *Striving Against Satan*, 48

²⁷ John Newton, *Works*, 6:214-215

²⁸ Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity*, 264

²⁹ William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armor*, 1:536-537

³⁰ Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity*, 266

changeableness, wisdom, knowledge, justice, and righteousness all protect the city and give her peace. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." He is set at high above his enemies surrounded or protected by the name of the LORD. "God's attributes are called His name, because by them He is known, as a man is known by His name" (Manton).³¹

(3) Bask yourself in the gospel of peace. Saturate your soul in the words of Scripture, especially the gospel of God's peace. Yes the gospel must be preached to others, but it must also be preached to ourselves. "How are these shoes put on? By a very simple way: a way which, I am afraid, a great many Christian people do not practice with anything like the constancy that they ought. For it is the Gospel that brings the peace, and if its peace brings the readiness, then the way to get the readiness is by soaking our minds and hearts in the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Maclaren).³² This means we must daily soak our souls in the words of Scripture, wherein we read of our pardon (which brings peace). It's only by believing God's promises (as revealed in Scripture), is peace given to our souls (and our feet made ready for battle). "What can make a soul more cheerful and give it more peace and pleasure, than a view of pardon by the blood of Jesus, and this given by Jesus Himself? Through an application of pardon, guilt is removed from the conscience and the burden is taken off" (Gill).³³

It is not by the law that peace is had, that was delivered in a storm, in the midst of blackness, darkness, and a tempest; and they that heard it, were terrified with it, and intreated it might not be spoken to them anymore; and surely they that desire to be under it, do not hear it, so as to understand the voice of it; for it pronounces the whole world guilty before God. But it is by the gospel, and the truths of it, which the Spirit of God enlightens the minds of men into, and makes application of, that peace is enjoyed; that is called, *The gospel of peace*, not only because it proclaims peace made by the blood of Christ, but because it speaks peace to the conscience of a sinner, when Christ comes by His Spirit, and preaches peace unto them, and makes the word effectual to such a purpose.³⁴

Then, as he stood watching and weeping, three Shining Ones suddenly appeared and greeted him. 'Be at peace!' The first announced. 'Your sins are forgiven!' The second one stripped off his tattered clothing and dressed him in bright, new garments. After this, the third one set a mark upon his forehead and handed him a Scroll with a seal on it. He directed Christian to study the Scroll as he travelled and to present it upon his arrival at the Celestial Gate. They then left Christian, and he leaped for joy three times as he went on his way singing.³⁵

³¹ Thomas Manton, *Works*, 10:310

³² Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, 14:201

³³ John Gill, *Body of Divinity*, 782

³⁴ John Gill, *Body of Divinity*, 783

³⁵ John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 38