

## Shoes of Readiness: The Gospel of Peace

### Review

- Victory in spiritual warfare comes not from ourselves, but from active and ongoing reliance on Christ. Nevertheless, “put on” and “take up” (vv. 11, 13) remind us: active reliance leads to responsible action.
- “The whole armor of God” are tools for gospel transformation, and should be studied through that grid:
  - Doctrine: How does the Bible define the doctrinal element (ex. “truth”) of the piece of armor?
  - Gospel: How does it point us to Jesus? How did Jesus use this armor in spiritual warfare?
  - Evil: How will the devil, the flesh, and the world use the opposite (ex. “lies”) to tempt us?
  - Armor: United to Jesus as our head, how does the church and its members use this armor? Does the action element (ex. “belt”) suggest any particular mode of application?
- Regarding the “breastplate of righteousness” (v. 14b), we noted the following:
  - “Righteousness” means conformity to God’s own character and revealed moral standard.
  - For believers, there is both “justifying” (WSC 33) and “sanctifying (WSC 35) righteousness.
  - Like the belt of truth, the “breastplate of righteousness” is Christ’s own armor (Is. 59.17).
  - The Enemy hates righteousness, and will tempt us to antinomianism, legalism, and w/ accusations.
  - We must remember that Jesus did not just pay for us; he also obeyed for us. The promise of his righteousness is our “breastplate” because it protects the vital places of our soul (1 Jn. 1.9):
 

“No spiritual protection is greater than a righteous relationship with God... To be clothed with a righteousness which is not one’s own but Christ’s, to stand before God not condemned but accepted – this is an essential defence against an accusing conscience and against the slanderous attacks of the evil one... [But] the Christian’s breastplate may [also] be righteousness of character and conduct. For just as to cultivate ‘truth’ is the way to overthrow the devil’s deceptions, so to cultivate ‘righteousness’ is the way to resist his temptations.”<sup>1</sup>

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“...and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.” (v. 15)

#### Doctrine<sup>2</sup>

- In Scripture, the idea of “**peace**” is deep and far-reaching. The Greek word used in the NT (*eirēnē*) is closely linked to the OT concept of *shalōm* – a comprehensive well-being that comes from God alone:
 

“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” (Num. 6.24-26)
- This well-being is not defined by human desires, but defined by God’s righteousness:
 

“Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.” (Ps. 85.10)

“Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea...” (Isa. 48.18)
- Such peace has both vertical (peace with God) and horizontal (peace with others) dimensions:
 

“Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5.1)

“For [Christ] himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...” (Eph. 2.14)
- This powerful peace is the special gift of Jesus to his disciples:
 

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.” (Jn. 14.27)

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.” (Jn. 16.33)

<sup>1</sup> John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1979), 278-279.

<sup>2</sup> Content under this heading is quoted or summarized from “*eirēnē*” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 2, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 111-117.

- Christ's peace is inseparably linked with other spiritual blessings:
  - “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph. 1.2)
  - “Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” (2 Cor. 13.11)
  - “For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” (Rom. 8.6)
  - “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Rom. 15.13)
- The peace of Christ is to be a defining mark of the church's fellowship and witness:
  - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...” (Gal. 5.22)
  - “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.” (Col. 3.15)
  - “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” (Rom. 12.18)
- The word “**readiness**” can mean “preparation” or “equipment,” and thus carries a double sense:<sup>3</sup>
  - Equipment: “a certain firmness or steadfastness which the gospel gives to those who believe it, like the firmness which strong boots give to those who wear them.”
  - Preparation: “We should always be ready to bear witness to Jesus Christ as God's peacemaker... readiness has a very stabilizing influence on our own lives, as well as introducing others to the liberating gospel.”

### *Gospel*

- Centuries before his coming, Jesus was announced by Isaiah as the one who would bring God's peace:
  - “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.” (9.6-7; cf. 54.10)
  - “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation...” (52.7)
  - “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” (53.5)
  - “I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream...” (Isa. 66.12)
- At the end of time, Jesus will return as the “God of peace” to crush Satan under our feet (Rom. 16.20).

### *Evil*

- The Enemy will tempt us toward all manner of compromise and false peace with the world (Jer. 6.14).
- The Enemy will seek to destroy the peace of conscience in believers (Rom 8.33-35, Rev. 12.1).
- The Enemy attacks peace in relationships by sowing strife – a “work of the flesh” (Gal. 5.20, Pro. 10.12).
- The Enemy never tires of sowing division in the church (1 Cor. 1.11, 3.3; 1 Tim. 6.4; Jas. 4.1-2).
- One of his most effective snares is to get us to nurse grudges (Eph. 4.26-27 vs. Mt. 18.15-17; 1 Pet. 4.8).

### *Armor*

- Peace is hard to maintain, and easy to lose. The boots Paul envisioned “equipped [a soldier] for long marches and for a solid stance ... While they did not impede his mobility, they prevented his foot from sliding.”<sup>4</sup>
- How should we actively “put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace”?
  - Answer all attacks against our consciences with the promise of God's peace in Jesus (Rom. 5.1).
  - Instead of nursing grudges, pray to become peacemakers (Mt. 5.9); strive for peace (Heb. 12.14).
  - “[Walk together] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4.2-3)

<sup>3</sup> Stott, *Ephesians*, 279-280.

<sup>4</sup> Markus Barth, cited in Stott, *Ephesians*, 279.