

The Believer's Armor, Part 3: The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

Scripture: Ephesians 6:15

Code: 1957

For our study this morning, I would invite you to turn to Ephesians chapter 6; we're looking at verses 13 through 17 on the theme of the believer's armor. I'd like to read verses 13 through 17 as a setting for our lesson today. "Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, with which ye shall 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."

There was a time in the life of Martin Luther when his conflict with Satan became so very real that it almost took on a physical manifestation, with the result that in anger over Satan, Martin Luther picked up his inkwell and threw it at the devil. It broke and splattered ink all over his wall, and the stain remained for many years, reminding many people of how vivid the conflict was in his own life. It is no less real in our lives, though we may not have the spiritual intensity of a Martin Luther to see it as such. The believer and Satan are in a mortal combat; verse 12 of Ephesians 6 says "we wrestle," and the verb is a term describing a life, death, hand to hand combat.

Now, God has such high and holy and lofty and grand and glorious purposes for the believer that He calls us to walk in a manner that sets us apart from the system. These are purposes which gain God His own glory. But on the other hand, Satan does and will continue to do all that he can to hinder us from realizing the purposes of God. Consequently, there's war in the life of a believer. I believe the war really begins at the moment of salvation, even before salvation, as the Word comes with the message of the Gospel. According to the words of our Lord, Satan attempts to snatch it away, so that a person can't respond. And when we become a believer, and we're just little children, as it were, in faith he sends our way a flood of false doctrine to toss us to and fro, and carry us about, away from the truth. He batters, and besieges, and accuses us relentlessly through all of our lifetimes. You go back to the point in time in which you see Jesus enter the world, and Satan does everything he can to have Jesus Christ murdered by Herod. He does everything he can during the very life of Christ to have Him killed, pushed off a cliff, crucified; Jesus conquers those efforts.

You find that in the Book of Acts as the church begins to carry the message of Jesus Christ the devil resists them all along the way. Paul begins his missionary journeys to extend the Gospel to the world and he runs into magicians, and sorcerers, and demon possessed people trying to thwart the effort.

Peter on the day of Pentecost runs into hostility, and from there on persecution breaks out of that church; the Sanhedrin are called to question these people and tell them to be silent. And all the way through the New Testament the Gospel is withstood, as it were, by Satan.

Finally, when the church is born in terms of its roots, and it has a foundation it begins to march into the centuries of, of time that we know as the year of our Lord, the first three centuries are fraught with persecutions of the church, the death of Christians, the martyrdom of those who love the Lord. And then we enter into the terror of the dark ages, in which the whole testimony of the Gospel becomes almost blotted out, except for a few flickers of faithful groups who believed the truth all through that time. Finally, in the time of the reformation the light dawns again, and we hear the Gospel ringing loud and clear as the birth of the Protestant Church takes place; and then there's a war at that level between Romanism and the Protestant Church.

Finally, we come to our own day, and Protestantism is fairly well entrenched, and the Gospel is known, and in comes the encroachment of modernism, and of liberalism, and of neo-orthodoxy, and psychology, and all of these other things, to say nothing of the attacks of Communism, and humanism, and materialism, and hedonism, and all of these others, so that we see from the very beginning all the way through, a terrible battle between Satan and the Gospel of Christ. And it isn't just a battle of movements, it isn't just a battle of ideologies – it's a battle in the life of every individual as Satan assaults the work of God which He attempts to accomplish in the life of His children. So there's a war, and that is why Paul closes Ephesians the way he does. Sure, we have resources in the first three chapters. Sure, we know we are to walk a worthy walk in the next chapters, but there's going to be resistance, and that's why he closes the way he does. Satan opposes everything God does. For example, Jesus reveals the truth; John 1:17 says, He is full of grace and truth. And Satan conceals it; in John 8:44 it says he's a liar and the father of lies. So Jesus is revealing the truth, and Satan is concealing it.

On the other hand, the Bible tells us in John 5:24 that Jesus gives life. He says, the Father has given life to Him, and He gives life to whomsoever He will. And Satan in John 8:44 is called a murderer – he takes life, and in Hebrews 2:14 it says of him that he has the power of death. And so Jesus gives life, and Satan takes life; Jesus reveals truth, and Satan conceals it. Jesus produces spiritual fruit. According to Galatians 5:22, Jesus produces in our lives, love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control, and Satan produces fleshly fruit, and it's listed also in Galatians 5. The fruit of the flesh is this: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, wrath, factions, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, wild parties etc.

Jesus, the Bible says, tests us that we might be mature. James 1 says the trying of our faith makes us perfect, whereas Satan tempts us to destroy us. "He goes about" says Peter "as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." So on the one hand, you have Jesus revealing truth, Satan concealing it; Jesus producing life, Satan taking life; Jesus producing spiritual fruit, Satan producing

vile and evil fleshly fruit; Jesus testing us to make us mature, and Satan devouring us to destroy. You have in John 8 this statement: that if you know the Son, the Son shall make you free. You have in Second Timothy 2:26 the fact that Satan makes you a slave. In 1 John 2:1, Jesus defends the believer: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." But in Revelation 12:10 the devil accuses us. So you have this tremendous conflict going on all the time between God and Satan in the life of a believer.

Now, how are we going to win? How are we going to know the victory? How do we get beyond our doubts? How do we rise above our, our sins? How do we supersede our indifferences? How do we attain the level of spiritual life that God calls us to? How do we walk worthy of a high calling, a heavenly calling? How do we defeat Satan? How do we get the victory? Well, the Bible gives us solutions; in fact, the New Testament gives us several key answers, and I want to run these by you. This is a little mini-theology of how a believer deals with Satan. And by the way, this is what the Bible teaches as the way you deal with Satan in your own life, and this is as far as it goes. There are people today who want to advocate exorcisms, and certain rituals, and they have certain formulas for dealing with Satan, but this is what the Scripture says. I'm going to give you about five or six principles. We're going to run right through them and give you a little sequence.

Number one: first, in order to know victory over Satan, we must recognize that Christ has already dealt a defeating blow to Satan, realize that Christ has already defeated him. In 1 John 3:8 it says that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. In Hebrews 2:14 it says He came to destroy him who had the power of death, to whom we were all our lifetime subject to bondage. So know this, beloved, that the Lord has already dealt a defeating blow.

Second thing: the New Testament says recognize that the power that dealt that blow resides in you. The power that defeated Satan is dwelling in you. In 1 John 4 it says in verse 4, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." When a believer is saved, he receives the Spirit of God; implanted in him is the power that defeated Satan. The resource, the reservoir is there.

Third thing: 1 Peter 5, verses 8 and 9, say this: "Be sober" – that means know your priorities, be committed – "be vigilant" – watch – "because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in faith."

Now notice, principle number one: recognize that Christ has already dealt a death defeating blow to Satan. Principle number two: recognize that that Satan-defeating power indwells you by the Spirit of God; that's your resource. Number three: resist Satan – resist him, and you can, because you have that available power.

Now you say, well, John how do you resist him, as Peter says? Well, let's look at Ephesians 4:27. That'll give us another concept. Ephesians 4:27 tells us how we resist Satan expressing his power in

our lives. Ephesians 4:27 simply says this: “Neither give a place to the devil.” Just don’t ever give him a place. It’s pretty simple, don’t give him a place. Now, the implication of the verse is that if he has a place it’s because you gave it to him, right? So that your will is the key.

Now let’s go back again. Start out by recognizing that the death blow has already been dealt. Then move on, secondly, to the fact that the death dealing power is resident in you. Be alert, then, to resist his efforts. What does that mean? It means give no place to Satan in your life. You say, “All right; how do I keep from doing that? How do I keep from giving no place to him? How do I keep from, as 2 Corinthians 2:11 says, ‘giving him an advantage?’” The answer is this. 2 Corinthians 2:11: “Be not ignorant of his devices.” All right, you want to not give him a place? Then be aware of where he’s coming from. Bar the door, close the windows, bolt the locks. Make sure you are not ignorant of his devices. You say, “Well, what are his devices?”

1 John says this: “For all” – that’s right, the word “all” – “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of God, but is of the world.” How does Satan come to you? The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. That’s his device. So if you’re not ignorant there – you bar the door at the lust of the eyes, you bar the door at the lust of the flesh, you bar the door at the pride of life – you will give no place to Satan. Having given no place to Satan, you will resist his entry into your life.

Here’s another thought: if you’re not going to give a place to the devil, that means you have to be aware of his devices; you can’t be ignorant. And secondly, when you see him coming, flee. 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee youthful lusts” – flee temptation – “and follow after righteousness,” it says.

Now that’s a pretty simple formula, people. Let me say it again, so you’ll get it. Realize the death-dealing blow has already been dealt by the power of Christ. Realize that power resides in your life; therefore, resist the devil, which means give no place in your life to him. You do that, number one, by not being ignorant of his devices, and two, when they come, by fleeing from them. You say, “Well, John, how do you, how do you get yourself oriented to do this?” That’s 2 Corinthians 10:3. 2 Corinthians 10:3: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.” What Paul is saying is we are human beings, but our battle is not a human battle. We are physical creatures, but our battle is not a physical battle; verse 4 of 2 Corinthians 10: “For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly.” No, we’re not fighting a human battle. Men are not really the enemy. The battle is not really on a human level, a fleshly level. Our weapons are not simply fleshly, “but are mighty through God.” In other words, we have a spiritual warfare demanding spiritual weapons.

Now, how are we going to use these weapons? How are we going to know we can, we can be aware of his devices, and that we can flee his temptations, and we can resist his onslaughts, and we can be sure to give no place to him in our lives? How are we going to appropriate the power? The end of verse 5 simply says, “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

Now listen, that's the final note in our little brief theology. In order for us to know Christ has dealt a death blow to Satan, in order for us to know that that same power resides in us, in order for us to resist Satan, to give no place to his entry, to not be ignorant of his devices, to flee his temptations, we must have every thought brought into captivity to Christ. In other words, we must have our mind controlled by the Word of God, through the power of the Spirit of God. There are no short cuts, beloved, to effective, victorious Christian living. If you're going to live a victorious Christian life, it means you must have a mind given over to the Word of God, so that your thinking, and your feeling is controlled by that very truth. Now, that's the New Testament formula in a theological framework, just taken from various passages; but let me go another step.

All of that is beautifully and wonderfully summarized in one passage. It's right in front of you, and it's Ephesians chapter 6 verses 13 to 17. All of those principles that I've just given you, in one way or another, are latent in this passage. They're all here, they're all available, and beautifully put together in this one masterpiece on how a believer wins the war against the forces of hell. And remember, beloved, there's a real war, and there's a real victory available on a day to day basis.

Now, what armor have we already examined? Look at verse 14. First of all, we said that as Paul looks at the Christian and his war with Satan, he sees in his mind a Roman soldier ready for battle. And all that the Roman soldier does to prepare himself suggests to the mind of Paul imagery that can be translated into the Christian's battle with Satan. And so he begins, then, to make the comparison, and as a Roman soldier wears a belt with which he pulls together his loose fitting robe, and really what he's doing at that point is making a commitment to fight. It is preparedness, it is readiness, it is anticipation, it is sincerity; it is a commitment to the battle that he's talking about. Paul sees in that the belt of truthfulness, "having your loins girded about with truthfulness," verse 14 says. And for a believer, there must be commitment to the truth. There must be a commitment to fight the fight, to live the life, to make the necessary dedication and consecration to win the battle. And so we began our study with a look at the level of commitment required to win.

Secondly, and in our last study, we saw the next piece of armor in verse 14 also, "and having on the breastplate of righteousness." We discussed that a Roman soldier would put on a breastplate to cover his vital areas; he didn't want to get hit here because it was fatal. And there were two areas he was protecting: the heart area and the rest, known as the bowels in Hebrew terminology. And the Hebrews saw the heart as indicative of the mind, primarily, and the bowels indicative of the feelings. And so the believer protects his mind and feelings, because those are the areas where Satan tempts. He tempts your thinking and your feeling. He wants to elicit sin out of you, induce sin out of you, by wrong thinking and wrong feelings. And so we must protect those areas, and the Scripture says that we protect those areas with the breastplate of righteousness. As we live a holy life, as we live a consecrated, separated, set apart, righteous kind of life, then we protect our vital areas from the terrible, fearful attack of Satan.

And we summarized it last time by saying daily we need to seek to be holy, daily we need to be righteous. Daily we need to live a life that if there is sin in our lives, we confess, repent, and turn from it. This is the injunction of the New Testament. In 1 Peter 1:16 we hear the cry, “Be ye holy; for I am holy,” says God. In 2 Corinthians 7:1 Paul says, “Cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” In Colossians chapter 3 we hear Paul say, “Kill the deeds of the body,” and then he lists all of the evil things. In 1 Thessalonians 5 it talks about eliminating every form of evil from our lives. But maybe the most clear and simple passage of all to illustrate the breastplate is Romans 13:11.

Down through verse 14, Paul says this: “Knowing the time, that it is high time to awake out of sleep – for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” In other words, we’re getting closer to the coming of Christ. “The night is far spent, the day is at hand” = that is the dawning of the great day of the Lord. “Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.” This is exactly what he’s saying in Ephesians; get rid of the darkness and put on the armor of light. And light signifies holiness, purity, and darkness signifies evil. So casting off the works of darkness, putting on the armor of light, that’s the breastplate.

Then he says, “Let us walk honestly” – that’s the belt of commitment; that’s the belt of truth, without hypocrisy, committed to win. “In full daylight” – willing to be exposed, because we’re upright and honest as we battle for the Lord – “set aside the wild parties, the drunkenness, the immorality, the wantonness” – which means living without shame – “the strife and the envying. And put on the Lord Jesus Christ; make no provision for the flesh.” So he’s really saying the same thing in Ephesians about the breastplate of righteousness; get rid of the garbage, the darkness, the evil and live in a holy and righteous relationship with the Lord. That doesn’t mean you’re going to be perfect. We’re to strive to be. We’ll fail, but when we do sin we are to be confessing, and repenting of that sin.

And then thirdly, and for this morning, I want you to see the feet shod with the gospel of peace. This is tremendous. Oh, what a great, marvelous concept this is. Verse 15: “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Now he comes to the soldiers’ shoes. Shoes have become a major part of our culture. Originally, shoes were used to protect feet; now they’ve become a fashion item. Frankly we don’t need that much protection for our feet. Our cars are carpeted, our streets have nice pavement, and our churches are carpeted, and our offices are carpeted, and the places that aren’t carpeted have fairly clean floors. For the most part, we aren’t wandering over rough stone, and wading through mud, and tramping in dust, or trying to stroll across thorny bushes, and so forth. We have pretty well paved and carpeted our world, and shoes have become primarily a fashion item. So we might not necessarily get the picture as clearly as we should unless we understand how terrible the terrain was, how piercing the thorns and, and items lying on the ground could be, how hard it would be to walk over the cobbles, and the rocks, and pebbles, and everything else in those parts of the world. Maybe we could get a little idea, because we see today a special need for shoes if we’re

hiking, or tramping across the desert, or walking on a hot pavement, or whatever, and this is the reason in those days for shoes.

Today also we have shoes for every conceivable kind of sport, and it's always amazing to me how everyone serves a function. If you're participating on a sport on concrete, you have a certain kind of shoe. If you're going to be on dirt, it's another kind of shoe. I notice that even for tennis, depending upon whatever kind of surface you're playing on – some grass courts at Wimbledon, some clay courts, some concrete courts, some of those rubberized ones – all has to have a different sole. And they've got certain kind of shoes for wood floors, and other kind of shoes for other floors. There are different track shoes, depending on whether you're running on a cinder track, or running on a rubberized track, and on and on it goes.

And now you go to your mall and you see a store there – I guess they call them Foot Lockers. I know my kids make a direct shot for it as soon as we get to the mall, fascinated with all of those things. They have all the shoes for all the reasons. I told you I was in Jerry Terrell's locker room the other night, and I looked in his locker, and there were about eight different pair of baseball shoes in there. And I said, "You have an awful lot of these." "Yeah, every team has a different surface. Every surface requires a different shoe."

And I can relate to that. I remember one time in college we were playing football, and we were playing over in the Rose Bowl, and it had rained for a couple of weeks before the game, and it was really pretty bad. And of course when the field gets a lot of play, it's toward the end of the season, the grass is primarily gone, and then it rains, and it just becomes problematic. What they do is they run a little cart across it and paint it green so it looks grassy, but there really isn't much grass. And it looked pretty good to us, and we didn't really know how it would be, so I had two pair of shoes in football one with long spikes for bad turf, and one with short ones, and I figured it would be all right. The long ones were kind of heavy, and I didn't like that. So I took my little short ones, and they were wrong.

And I had inadequate shoes, and I really didn't discover it until the kick off, and I was back deep on the 4 yard line to take the opening kickoff and return it. And the ball came down out of the air, and I gathered it in, and took about two steps, and landed on my southern hemisphere, in front of the whole world, and sat there with the ball gently cradled in my lap, while twenty-one people stared down at me, none of whom had even touched me. I fell all alone, and sat there on the 6 yard line while we started together as a team from deep in our own territory. And I realized, "You know, I should have had my other shoes," and I even tried on the sidelines to get somebody who didn't play as frequently as I did to swap, but I couldn't get any takers, so I slipped and slid all over the field.

We have reasons for the things that we have; the shoes provide a certain function. And this is especially true in war; if it would be important in athletics, you can imagine how important it would be if you were fighting for your life. And a Roman soldier wouldn't get out in a battle with just a normal

leather shoe with a slick bottom. He'd be slipping and sliding all over everyplace. He'd be trying to climb a rock to fight a guy, and he'd be slipping down the rock. And so they had to have a special shoe, and it was very important, because in battle this would save your life, very possibly. Also, they had to have the kind of a shoe that would last for long marches, because they would cover tremendous amounts of terrain.

You'll remember reading about the Roman army. You remember reading about Caesar's long marches. And many wars have been lost because soldiers didn't have adequate shoes. You've even read about times in the American Revolutionary War when you see the soldiers under General Washington with their feet being wrapped, because they could no longer have shoes, they were so worn out. There have been other points in human history where battles have been lost because they couldn't protect the feet of the soldiers from being frozen, or injured, or wounded. Also, in the time of the Roman wars, there was a common custom. Today we have mine fields to trap approaching armies. In those days, knowing that an army was coming behind a certain army, they would plant in the grounds sticks sharpened to a razor point, facing toward the army, hoping to pierce the feet of the advancing soldiers. And so in order to protect themselves the Roman soldiers would wear a boot that had a heavy sole so that it couldn't be pierced, because if their feet were pierced they couldn't walk, and that could debilitate the entire soldier. You know, he could be the best soldier there was – he could have the greatest strength and all of that – but if his feet were hurt, the bottom of his feet, he's finished.

It's amazing. You can hurt your arm, your hands, your elbows, your shoulders, and still you can keep moving and function, but you hurt your feet, and you're really debilitated. And so they would try to pierce their feet. Also, in the battle you may be the strongest man alive, you may have the greatest sword there is, but if you can't stand up you're in real trouble.

And so there was such an importance of footwear and here's what they used. They used a thick-soled, hobnailed, semi-boot that came around like this on their foot, and then had straps that tied it in all directions, so that it was tremendously tight, adhering to their foot. On the bottom they had hobnails, little pieces of metal that protruded from the bottom, like a football, or a track shoe, or a baseball shoe, to give them a grip on the soil. This gave them firmness of footing so they could stand in the battle, and that's what Paul sees. He sees this Roman soldier standing, and his feet are firm, and he's able to hold his ground, and make quick moves, and keep his feet. He doesn't slip, and he doesn't slide, and he doesn't fall.

Now he says the Christian needs to have shoes, too. You can get out there, you know, and you can have your waist all cinched up – boy, you're committed. And you can have your breastplate on, and you have living a godly and righteous life as the Lord wishes, but unless you can stand on your feet, you're going to fall over. And so you must have a solid base.

Now let's go back to verse 15 and see specifics. Your feet are to be shod with the preparation, and the word "preparation" here need not confuse you. It's probably a little awkward, the way it's translated. It simply means made ready or equipped, and all he is saying is your feet should be made ready by being shod, that's what he's saying. They should be equipped, they should be prepared; that's the idea. In fact in Titus 3:1, the same term, preparation, is translated readied, so it's the idea to be ready, to be prepared, to be equipped. Our feet should be equipped; they should be properly shod for the battle.

Now, most people who read this, and many commentators who've written on it, assume that it has reference to going along preaching the Gospel of peace. Boy, I've got my shoes of the Gospel on, and off I go to preach. And you know they basically get that out of Romans 10:15, because in Romans 10:15 it quotes Isaiah 52:7: "As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.'" How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace. You have the same phrase there, the Gospel of peace. And so in Paul's message in Romans 10:15, you know when he says, "How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall anyone preach except he be sent," and so therefore how beautiful are the feet of those who go and preach the Gospel of peace.

Now, the Gospel of peace – watch this – is something to be preached, no question. It is something to be taken and preached. That's what Romans 10 is talking about. That is not what Ephesians 6 is talking about. Ephesians 6 has nothing to do with preaching. It has nothing to do with going anywhere. What is the first word in verse 14; what is it? Stand – this is not going, this is standing that the Apostle is in reference to. And the point here is not evangelizing the lost, the point here is not preaching the Gospel, the point here is fighting the devil. This is not evangelism for an unbeliever, this is conflict for a Christian. He is not talking about going anywhere and preaching, he's talking about standing where you are and fighting the devil. The idea is best in the words, expressed in the words of 1 Corinthians 16:13, "Stand fast in the faith." "Stand fast in the faith" – verse 11 – "that ye may be able to stand." That's the issue. Verse 13: "That you may withstand, and having done all, to stand." It's all about standing, not about going.

So, that is not the proper interpretation. Sure the Gospel of peace can be preached. It is to be preached, and beautiful are the feet of those who go and preach it, but that's not the issue here. This is not evangelism. This is the believer in conflict with Satan. And he is saying because our feet are shod with the Good news of peace, we stand our ground; we don't slip, we don't slide, we don't fall when we're under attack.

Now, let's look at the phrase the Gospel of peace. Well, what is that? What is it? Well Gospel means what? Good news. And peace means what? Peace. It's the good news of peace. And what is the Good news of peace? Romans chapter 5 – turn to it because it's a very important passage. Romans

chapter 5 – this is the Good news of peace. I want you to notice verse 6, Romans 5:6. Now here is the basic picture of man. “When we were yet without strength” – all right, man is weak, he is weak. Verse 7: “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die” – which means for an unrighteous man nobody would ever die. So the implication is in verse 6 we are weak, in verse 7 we are unrighteous. In verse 8, “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” – so we’re sinners. Verse 9: “Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath” – that indicates we were unjustified, unsaved, and the objects of God’s wrath.

Now, there’s a definition of man: verse 6, weak, verse 7, unrighteous, verse 8, sinful, verse 9, unjustified, unsaved, and an object of wrath. Summing it all up, that kind of man, verse 10, “If, when we were enemies” – that’s the sum. You take a man who is weak, unrighteous, sinful, unjust, unsaved, and what have you got? An enemy of God, who is the object of God’s judgment.

God and man, now mark it people, are on two different sides. Don’t let anybody pump you the line that God is the Father of everybody; that God loves and tolerates everybody; that everybody is in God’s family. We read at the opening of our service Nahum chapter 1, which says, “God will not acquit the wicked.” God is a God of vengeance and a God of justice, and if a man and a woman are enemies against God, they will feel God’s judgment. But what did God do to change this? Verse 6 again: “When we were weak, in due time Christ died.” Verse 7: we were unrighteous, and “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man some would dare to die. But God commended his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” God says, “You’re enemies but I’m going to try to remedy this in the death of Christ.” “And we then are justified” – verse 9 – “by his blood, we are saved from wrath through him. When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” Do you see?

Now then, listen to me, what is the Gospel? The Gospel is that man was at war with God, but Christ made peace, right? Christ made peace; that’s the Gospel of peace. Now go back to verse 1 of chapter 5 of Romans: “Therefore, being justified by faith,” – because of what Christ has done – “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” That’s the Gospel. The Gospel is that man and God were at war, and God was on the opposite side against man – like Jesus said, “If you’re not with me, you’re” – what – “against me.” In the Book of Revelation, the Lord says, “I will come against you and fight with you with the sword out of my mouth.” So man is an enemy of God, and yet Christ comes, and makes peace a reality. That’s the good news. The good news is that you are at peace with God. God and you aren’t on other sides anymore. You’re on the same side, right? God’s on my side. That’s the Gospel of peace. We are reconciled.

Second Corinthians 5:19 says, “He has reconciled us.” Colossians, tremendous passage, chapter 1 and verse 20, “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself. And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” You see? The Gospel is that we are one with God; He is on our side. Now you

know what that means? That means that a Christian who stands firm says, "Look Satan, you come against me all you want. I've got shoes that anchor me in the ground immovable because God is on my side," you see? That's what helps us stand.

If I had to stand there and fight off the host of hell by myself, in my own strength, I'd lose. Illustration: Peter in the garden, John 18; he's standing there with the disciples while the soldiers come to capture Christ, and there probably are five hundred of them marching from Fort Antonius, and they have torches to light the night, so they can find Jesus. They assume He'll be hiding in a cave somewhere, and they come marching into that garden. And they've got clubs and staves ready to beat Him into submission and ready to fight off His disciples. And Jesus steps out and meets them, and says, "Whom seek ye?" And they reply, "Jesus, of Nazareth." And they fell over on their backs like a bunch of dominoes laying in the dirt – the whole five hundred of them at least, however many there were, went down like dominoes. They all crawled back up and dusted themselves off and "He said, 'Whom seek ye?'" again, and they said, "Jesus, of Nazareth." They had fallen flat on the ground.

Peter's thinking to himself, no doubt, "Man, what power – just His name, and the whole Roman army collapses." And he gets an idea – if He's this powerful there's no sense in being taken, right? So the Bible says he grabs his sword, and he chops off the ear of the servant of the high priest. He was not trying to chop off Malchus' ear. I'm convinced he was going for his head, and Malchus ducked. I know that. That's all – Malchus had good reactions. It wouldn't have done any good to chop off an ear. But that wasn't the whole story; the story is he's going to fight the whole Roman army.

You say, "Where does he get that kind of strength? What gives him that confidence?" He had just seen that whole army fall flat in the dirt at the very name of Jesus, and he's saying to himself, "Well, if I get in any trouble, I'll just say, 'Get 'em, Jesus.' Zap, and down they go." It's a sense of invincibility, you see; he has a sense that there's nothing that can ever defeat him, because he's seen the power displayed already. And he takes the sword, and he begins to defend the Lord. Ah, he knew who was on his side, you see? He knew who was on his side, and that's where the resource came.

I think about the host of Midian, and the host of Midian comes to assault and attack the children of Israel. And God moves upon the hearts of Israel to fight against the Midianites, and so the people in Israel decide to get the army together and they get thirty-two thousand soldiers, the crack troops, you know, going to go out and fight Midian. And the Lord says, "Look, I don't need thirty-two thousand soldiers to do this. Get rid of everybody who's not serious." And so He tells Gideon to work a little system, and finally Gideon does, and they wind up with three hundred guys.

And the Lord says, "All right, you three hundred are going defeat the host of Midian – everybody get a pitcher and a candle and a trumpet." Yeah, and if I'd have been there I'd have said, "That's a little weird." "You get up on a mountain and ring the host of Midian down in the valley, and when I give you the word blow the trumpet, bust the pitcher, and arrow-stick up the candle, and and we'll win the

battle.” And you know what happened - they did, and the host of Midian got up and killed each other.

Listen, Gideon knew who was on his side. You see, he knew who was on his side. Peter and John walked into the Sanhedrin, and they said, “It doesn’t matter to us what you say; we’re going to serve God,” and they had no fear; they knew who was on their side. The Apostle Paul did the same thing, boldly preached Jesus Christ, because he knew his resources. He was at peace with God. God was on his side, you see? And in that we stand, and I can say to Satan, “Bring it on, whatever you want.” I can say, “Whatever you have to cast against me, I have absolutely no fear, ’cause God’s on my side.”

You know something? Knowing what I know, if I wasn’t a Christian, and didn’t have God on my side, I’d be scared all the time, I’d be scared to death. Listen: you can stand in absolute confidence. Eight years ago or so when I taught the Book of Ephesians the first time, I told you a story; I’m going to repeat it. When I was in junior high in the 7th grade I had a little friend named Roger. Roger was a little guy. We were both in the 7th grade and Roger, he was just kind of, he looked like about a 4th grader. He just hadn’t really developed much. He was kind of pudgy. He looked like the Pillsbury man that you poke, you know? He was just puffy, and cute, and you know cherubic. And Roger was my little friend because I was the pastor’s son, and he was in the church too, and we were Sunday School buddies, and so, you know, we walked around this very rough junior high.

I mean this was a really rough junior high. We had knife fights all the time, and in the boy’s room when you go in they had a fuse box, and on the fuse box, the kids would open it. And they’d leave marijuana cigarettes burning, and everybody would come in and take a drag, and this was in 1950, I don’t know, sometime in the 1950’s, you know. And it wasn’t like it – we think of drugs as something very modern. No, no – it was going on all the time then. Kids were spaced out all the time. We had a parking lot for the kids that drove to school in junior high, you know, because they were so old. Herbie was 18 and had his own car, you know; he was in our class. It was a really rough school, and there were fights constantly, just constantly. It got to the place where for some reason they liked to tease Roger. He just by his looks invited that kind of stuff. And so we’d go walking along, and they’d be always yelling stuff at Roger and teasing him, and I remember, this would commonly happen. These guys were always in trouble for wearing their pants too low in those days, you know? And the guy who was the vice principal would always, when he’d catch them, hike their pants up and tie a big belt around them, make them wear suspenders to embarrass them, you know? And this just agitated them all the more, so they were always upset and one day – this was very common – we’d be walking down. And they’d come up, and hit the back of us, and knock all our books out, which we’d carry under our arms, and then kick them. There’d be about six of them, and they’d just keep kicking them all down the walk, and into the bushes, and neither one of us could defend ourselves against that kind of stuff. And so we just kind of, you know, we’ll pick up our books and try to find our papers.

One day I was in shop, and I was sanding some little thing, and this one kid who was the leader named Johnny took a two by four block, and threw it across, and split my head, and I had to have it

sewn up and everything. And so you know it was just something; I don't know what we did, but we just kept getting it you know. And so this went on all the time, and this one kid named Johnny was the leader. Well, one day we were in the locker room, and we were just preparing to leave after gym class, and the gang came by. And they were the hoods, the hard guys, we called them, and they came along, and they thought it would be real cute. And they came by and elbowed us, and we went over the bench, and into the lockers, and the back of our heads – it was like a comedy act – just together, *fhoomp*, you know, *bang*, see, Alphonse and Gaston, you know. And there we are, laying on the floor, and Roger finally says, "That's enough." You, you can only take so much, right?

Well, I said, "What are you going to do about it, Roger?" And he said, well, he was going to tell his brother. And I said, "Well, that's good." And his brother's name was Steve. I'll never forget them, the Williams family. Steve played middle linebacker for Long Beach State. Steve was 6'4", about 245, and had a 30-inch waist. And I'll never forget Steve because I remember the first time I heard him give his testimony. He was driving a bread truck, and he hit a concrete wall going 40, and walked away. That's the kind of guy he was; tremendous physical specimen.

Anyway, Roger said he's going to tell his brother, so I said, "Good, Roger." So he came back the next day and he said, "Steve's coming to school tomorrow, and he's going to do something." So these guys all had an area by the gym where they had worn out the grass – they'd come early every morning, and smoke, and sneak in pot, and everything. And they'd stand there, and wear out the grass, and just carry on their conversation; about six or so of them, and they were just always there. So this one day, Steve was there, only he stayed behind a building where they couldn't see. And it was about fifteen minutes before school, and Roger and I were just sort of hanging around, waiting to see what would happen. And so Roger yelled, and he says, "Hey you," to this Johnny, "come here." And oh, they were laughing; they were really going to lay it on. So this Johnny kid comes swaggering out. He had a police record. In fact, later on – it's kind of sad, you know – later on he actually wound up being killed in some kind of robbery or something.

But anyway, he came swaggering out, and he was laughing and mocking Roger. Just at that point, Steve walked around the corner of the building. And he walks up to Roger and he says, "Which one?" Roger says, "That one." At which point, Steve walked over to this guy – I'll never forget it – this is exactly what happened. He just picked the guy up by the shirt, lifted him up, took his fist and knocked out four teeth with one shot. Just crushed his nose down, his two top teeth, and I don't know what all. And then he picked him up – and of course, the guy was out – he picked him up, and there was a big hedge in front of the wall of the gym. And he threw over the hedge, against the wall, and down behind the bush. And then he said to the rest of the guys, "Don't you ever mess with Roger again," and he walked away. You want to know what happened at our junior high? Roger ruled. No question about it. Roger ruled North Downey Junior High. You know why? Because Roger had resources.

You know, it's tremendous to know that Jesus Christ said, "I am not ashamed to call you my brothers." It's a great thing to know that He's on our side, amen? And when Satan comes to attack, our feet are rooted firmly on the solid ground of the Gospel of peace, which says, "The good news, people, is that I'm not an enemy. I'm not on the other side. God's on my side, because of Jesus Christ." And so no matter what Satan brings, I can, as verse 10, says, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." And that's the confidence of having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.

Listen, victory is available in your life as a Christian; just answer these three questions as I close. Number one: do I really want to win? Do I really want to win? Do I have on a belt of commitment? Question number two: do I seek to live a holy life; do I have a breastplate of righteousness? And number three: am I bold in the battle, because my feet are firmly rooted in confidence in God? If you're running around doubting the Lord and His strength, you're going to lose. But if you can answer those three questions "yes," you're a winner, and God's going to do exciting and revolutionary things with your life for His own glory. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You this morning for the confidence that Your Word gives us. Thank You that Jesus Christ died for us, so that we no longer were enemies but friends, so that we were not estranged but brought into the family; so that we were not alienated, but made partakers of the divine nature. Oh God, thank You for Jesus Christ, who paid our penalty, who bore our judgment, who took Your vengeance and Your justice, that we might know Your amazing grace. Oh Lord, thank You for giving us the resources, thank You for planting within us the very death-dealing power that caused the fall of Satan. Thank You for giving us in that power of the Spirit of God the strength to resist the devil, to neither give him a place, to never be ignorant of his devices, and to always flee his temptations, because our thoughts are brought into the captivity of Jesus Christ. Oh God, make us obedient to your Word, and we will thank you for the privilege, in Christ's name. Amen.

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