

**“Our Weapons: “Feet Shod With Readiness”  
Ephesians 6:15 (Romans 5:1-11)**

**March 11, 2018**

**SI:** We’re looking in depth at a few verses at the end of Ephesians, chapter 6. Paul says the context of the Christian life is spiritual warfare.

**INTRO:** The historian Denis Winter says that during WWI 52,000 British soldiers were diagnosed with trench foot and were so disabled by it they had to leave the front lines. Over 50,000 men couldn’t fight because of their feet. A foot wound won’t kill you but it can keep you from doing your part. You can’t march to the battlefield or charge the enemy if feet messed up.

What does Paul say the Christian soldier is supposed to put on his feet?  
Putting on or strapping on your feet the readiness of the gospel of peace.

This word readiness can also be translated preparation.  
Readiness means not being caught flat-footed.

It’s the nimbleness of a dancer, it’s the surefootedness of an athlete.  
It’s the firm tread of a soldier.  
And Paul says it’s a particular kind of readiness, it has a particular source.  
It’s the readiness of the gospel of peace.

Now at first glance you might think that Paul’s talking about being peaceful. That you learn to be so peaceful and so calm, so cool and collected— that no matter what comes your way, you are ready. But that’s not uniquely Christian. You don’t need Jesus or the gospel to achieve peacefulness.

Buddhism and the Eastern religions offer peacefulness through meditative techniques and philosophy and they are quite effective. Devotees can become so calm and detached things don’t bother them. Islam teaches that if you completely submit to Allah, he will give you peace. Devout Muslims can enjoy a sort of fatalistic peacefulness that makes them quite impervious to bad things. Even non-religious secularism offers peacefulness through psychological techniques and counseling and medication. It’s effective for many people.

We need to be humble about this as Christians.  
Yes, there is peacefulness and calmness in our faith.  
Yes, the Bible promises it. Yes, Jesus gives it.  
But we don’t have a monopoly on peacefulness in this life. (Important qualification)

Other religions offer pathways to it and many of their followers say they have it.

But Paul doesn't say the readiness that comes from peacefulness.

He says: The readiness of the gospel of peace.

And the gospel of peace is absolutely unique to our faith.

What is the gospel of peace?

It's peace with God through Jesus Christ.

Behind that phrase—Peace with God through Jesus Christ—is profound theology.

You have to understand it, believe it, have a grip on it, remind self of it.

And if you do, you'll be ready for any path.

Having your feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace is

the ability to march through life in a sure-footed, nimble way that only comes from knowing that you are at peace with God.

Now, is there peacefulness in that? Is there calmness?

Yes. A lot of times there is. But that's not the essence of it.

Peace with God through Jesus Christ is something outside of you.

It's a status you have. It's a new relationship with God.

We're going to look at this under three headings:

1. The hostility of man
2. The wrath of God
3. The readiness of gospel of peace

And just so you're ready for this sermon and can pace yourself—

the first two points are going to be mostly doctrinal,  
and it won't be until the last point we get to practical application.

## **MP#1 The hostility of man**

Romans 8:7 says “The sinful mind is hostile to God.”

Some old translations say the mind of the flesh is enmity against God.

Enmity means animosity, antagonism, hatred.

Apart from Christ, sinful minds don’t just ignore God, they war against him.

Paul says in another letter to Gentile converts:

Once you were alienated from God, were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

That raises lots of questions.

Why do you encounter people who haven’t made a personal profession of faith, but who are respectful towards Christianity?

What if someone said: I’m not a Christian but I believe there is a God.

I admit I don’t pay any attention to him or pray—but I don’t hate him.

Jonathan Edwards wrote a treatise in 1736 called *Men Naturally Are God’s Enemies*

He answers all these questions.

But one of the most interesting things answers is the question why.

The Bible says men are naturally God’s enemies—but why?

Edward’s answer to that question helps answer lots of other questions.

This is probably too long to read in a sermon, but I’m going to anyway.

The general reason [people are God’s enemies] is that God is opposed to them in the worship of their idols.

People are at war with God because he is opposed to their idols.

Then he describes the fall of Adam and Eve through this grid.

The fall of man consists in departing from the true God, to idols; forsaking his Creator, and setting up other things in his place. When God at first created man, he was united to his Creator; the God that made him was his God. The true God was the object of his highest respect, and had the possession of his heart. Love to God was the principle in his heart, that ruled over all other principles; and every thing in the soul was wholly in subjection to it. But when man fell, he departed from the true God, and the union that was between his heart and his Creator was broken. He wholly lost his principle of love to God. And henceforward man clung to other gods. He gave that respect to the creature, which is due to the Creator. When God ceased to be the object of his supreme love and respect, other things of course became the objects of it.

Man was made to worship his Creator.

But since the fall, mankind worships created thing.

Then Edwards explains why people worship other things.

It’s because we’re made to worship. We’re made to give our hearts to something.

Man will necessarily have something that he respects as his god. If man [does] not give his highest respect to the God that made him, there will be something else that has the possession of it. Men will either worship the true God, or some idol. It is impossible it should be otherwise. Something will have the heart of man. And that which a man gives his heart to, may be called his god.

When your heart set on something, when you believe your life and happiness and purpose is bound up in it, how do you respond when something threatens it? What does a momma bear do when something gets between her and her cubs? She goes to war against it.

That which a man chooses for his god, he sets his heart mainly upon. And nothing will so soon excite enmity, as opposition in that which is dearest. A man will be the greatest enemy to him who opposes him in what he chooses for his god . . . “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” And this is the very reason that men hate God . . . That which is a man’s god, is the object of his highest love; so that God who chiefly opposes him in it, must be the object of his greatest hatred.

The reason you don’t see every unbeliever shaking his fist at heaven and shouting curses is that God mostly leaves people alone, leaves idols untouched. And when their idols are challenged or taken away or denied—most people have so suppressed the knowledge of God that their enmity comes out in other ways. It’s usually directed at other people or systems.

Even as Christians, when something is denied us we sometimes get mad or irritated. Or when a fellow believer challenges us about something or corrects us and we get offended or defensive—that’s probably residual enmity toward God from our old sinful nature.

What has probably really bothered us deep down about those encounters is that our idols have been threatened and we’re reacting like a she bear. Isn’t that humbling?

In just a minute we’ll talk about how the Gospel deals with our enmity towards God.

But this is the condition of all people apart from grace—they are at war with God.

But that’s just one side of the equation. Every war has two opponents. That brings us to the second point . . .

## **MP#2 God's wrath**

Not only is natural man at war with God.

God is at war with the people who hate him.

But we need to be very precise and careful about how we understand this.

The Bible often describes the hostility from God's side as his wrath.

What is God's wrath?

God's wrath is his judicial hatred of sin.

God's wrath is his judicial warfare against lawbreakers.

Let me give you an illustration.

Suppose a man is arrested for armed robbery and put on trial.

His court case has a name, it's John Smith vs. The State of Alabama.

The State of Alabama goes to war against John Smith on behalf of justice and the defense of its law-abiding citizens.

The judge acts on behalf of the state to bring the law to bear.

Tell me if this scenario is plausible.

The man is found guilty beyond a shadow of a doubt and the judge says:

You committed a serious crime. I hate what you did to your victims.

I know you were dealt a poor hand in life and my heart goes out to you for that.

If things had been different, you probably wouldn't be here today.

But I am compelled by my office and by justice to sentence you though it brings me no pleasure to do so. 30 years to life.

Plausible? Of course that's plausible.

I'm sure many a good judge has brought judicial wrath to bear but has done so with a heavy heart for the wreck this person before him has made of his life.

When a good judge passes sentence, it's not petty vindictiveness on his part.

So when the Bible says that God hates all evildoers,

and that he is angry with the wicked every day,

and that his wrath is being revealed against the godless

and that he will tread the winepress of the fury of his wrath—that's judicial.

Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? asks Moses.

God's character is perfectly just.

But like the human judge, that is not all God is. He's not only just. Also loving.

Bible says he take no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

He is not willing that any should perish.

Into this seemingly hopeless warfare comes something wonderful.

Romans 5:10

“When we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son.”

God, in his judicial wrath, looked down with love on his enemies.

even though we had broken His laws, hostile to Him

God the Father said, “I will pay their debt so they will not be crushed.”

Sent His Son, Lord Jesus Christ—It pleased the Lord to crush Him

With the death of Jesus Christ, barrier of hostility between God and man removed

God the Father turns to you and says—the debt has been paid

“Peace on earth, good will to men on whom His favor rests.”

You’re still an enemy in your mind

So He sends His Holy Spirit to wake you up spiritually

to show you your hostility and sin and rebellion

call you to repent of it, and turn to Him in faith

When you finally understand and believe—God loved me even though I hated Him

every debt of mine was paid by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross

God made peace with me even though He didn’t have to

if He hadn’t, would have been perfectly just in throwing me into hell

Finally realize, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ,

the warfare is over—you see the problems, trials, and losses of life in a new light.

Before you have peace with God, troubles and losses and problem people

are threats to your idols, threats to your strategy for happiness.

They make you angry. How dare they! That’s repressed anger at God.

But if you know that God is not your enemy, he’s not out to destroy your happiness,

and if from your side you now trust him, that changes everything.

Romans 5 again.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

What does Paul do with the knowledge of this peace?

And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

See it all in a new light. Let’s explore that in more detail.

### **MP#3 The readiness of the gospel of peace**

The footwear of the Roman soldier was a remarkable design.

It provided him with three things.

First, it gave him traction.

The soles had hobnails. Hobnails are short metal cleats.

The Romans perfected fighting in formation.

Shoulder to shoulder with shields interlocked and spears thrusting they would move forward like a human tank. So if the ground was muddy, or if you were grinding over the bloody bodies of enemies, hobnails kept from slipping.

Second, it gave him protection.

One defense against marching armies were buried metal spikes—  
it was like the minefield of ancient times.

So Roman footwear had a very hard sole of boiled leather.

Third, it gave him mobility. It was light and comfortable.

A hybrid sandal/boot. Worn with or without socks depending on weather.

But it was such a good design that it allowed Roman armies to swiftly march great distances and often win by catching the enemy unprepared.

Apply these metaphors to the Christian life

1. Traction—Gospel of peace gives you spiritual grip.

No matter what is happening you can say, I know who I am and where I stand.

I have peace with God, so the big question of life is settled.

Anything else that comes along is small in comparison

The theological name for this traction is assurance.

Here's my favorite assurance quote: J.C. Ryle. Only read it to you 100 times. ,

Now assurance . . . enables (a child of God) to feel that the great business of life is a settled business, the great debt a paid debt, the great disease a healed disease, and the great work a finished work; and all other business, diseases, debts and works are then by comparison small. In this way assurance makes him patient in tribulation, calm under bereavements, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings, in every condition content; for it gives him a fixedness of heart. It sweetens his bitter cups; it lessens the burden of his crosses; it smooths the rough places over which he travels; it lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It makes him always feel that he has something solid beneath his feet and something firm under his hands—a sure friend by the way, and a sure home at the end.

2. The gospel of peace gives you spiritual toughness.

I don't mean a life free of tears. Toughness and tears sometimes go together.

Jesus wept but he never complained.

By spiritual toughness I mean you're enabled to no longer see life as unfair.

You don't look at circumstances that shake your plans for happiness as unfair

because you know that what's really unfair is that you have any blessings at all.

You were by nature God's enemy. He was your enemy judicially.

You deserved hell but he gave his Son as your substitute.

The gospel of peace also give you toughness toward your enemies.

Not toughness to oppose them but the toughness to forgive them.

Jonathan Edwards said in his article:

If we are all naturally God's enemies we may learn what a spirit it becomes us as Christians to possess toward our enemies.

I was God's enemy, I wronged him, he forgave me and his Spirit is in me.

I can do this. I can forgive this person through the gospel of peace.

3. The gospel of peace give you spiritual mobility.

The gospel of peace is a constant reminder you are on the move through this life.

As the old hymn says: "We're marching to Zion."

Paul in Romans 5 says:

We have peace with God, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Peace with God makes him immediately think about heaven.

Knowing that gives you spiritual mobility.

You can go places and do things and make sacrifices and take risks because you know this life is not the end, just brief warm-up for great things ahead.

New heavens and new earth. In Father's house are many mansions.

A number of years ago I attended the funeral of one of my high school teachers.

He taught Bible at Westminster Christian Academy in Huntsville.

His name was Mr. Alling, he was an older man and seemed quirky to us.

He lived very simply, rode a bicycle a lot. Ate unappealing lunches.

I learned more about him in later years and even more at funeral.

He was a successful engineer for a large company.

Left that and went into the ministry.

Ended up on staff of Westminster Church in Huntsville.

When Christian school was starting in late 60s he gave his savings,

\$40,000 of blue chip stock from former employer.

Which had he kept, he wouldn't have had to ride bike and eat tuna fish—

That was his opportunity and calling, he was able to take that daring step because he had the mobility that came from the Gospel of peace.

The hope of glory. What's this wealth compared to the wealth God has for me.

**CONC:** Do you have peace with God? If you are trusting Christ then you have it. God's not at war with you, he's your friend.

His Holy Spirit has filled you and given you a love for God too.  
So put on the readiness it gives you.

And there will be no path of life, no matter how difficult or painful,  
in which you say:

This is happening to me because God hates me,  
wants to squash my happiness, ruin my plans.

I am at peace with God. No warfare. I have surrendered to one who is my friend.

I can march down every path of life with that confidence.

Gospel enables you to be spiritually sure-footed, nimble, quick, not easily surprised  
because Gospel gives you peace with God.

Are you sure-footed? Slip and fall at every difficult turn of life?

Put on the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace.