

## The Shoes of Peace

Message #4 in the series "Finding Victory in a No-Win World"

St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Elizabethtown  
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I want to direct your attention to a very special passage of scripture. It is the passage that we have been studying together for the past several weeks in this message series. This is Paul's letter to the Ephesians Chapter 6:10-20. Let's listen together as God speaks to us. Feel free to use your Bible to follow along and let's allow the word of God to dwell in us richly. This is what it says,

***"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak." [Ephesians 6:10-20 NSRV].***

Will you join with me in prayer?

*Lord God, open us up to Your word and open Your word up to us. Teach us, Lord, what You would have us learn as You can form our lives into the disciples that You have called us to be. All of this Father, we pray in Jesus' name and all God's people said, Amen.*

There's a very important verse that I want to pull out of that section of scripture today, and as we continue in this message series, the next layer of the armor of God that we're going to talk about is embedded in this verse. It is verse 15, and this is what it says in the New Revised Standard Version translation that's what I had just read. This is verse 15,

***"As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace." [Ephesians 6:15 NSRV].***

Put on whatever, whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. You know, when I read that passage and I began studying through all of the ramifications of what this verse is saying, something just didn't sit right with me. Now, far be it for me to push against or to challenge biblical scholars that know a ton more than I do, but I'm going to do it anyway. And so, when I looked at this verse and the way it was translated, I went, "How is this consistent with what Paul has been teaching us all along that we are in this grand spiritual battle? We are called to stand." We're called to stand. In this particular translation when I read it, I'm reading that there's a sense of movement that were to go and be ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. Now hear me, I think being ready to proclaim the gospel of peace is a good thing. It is good for us to always be ready and it's good for us to go. That's our job. That's the job of the church. It's our job description to proclaim the good news. But in this context, I think Paul is trying to get us to do something else. Let me explain. So, what I did is I went into the original language, I went to the Greek and I want to give you my own translation of this verse. It is from the DEW version. Those are my initials. And this is how I literally translate from the Greek of the New Testament,

***"And having put on your feet, the shoes of readiness and the gospel of peace." [Ephesians 6:15 DEW].***

Let me kind of explain what gives me the probable arrogance to assume that I could translate this better than Bible scholars that have tons more experience than me. So I'm wired and I'm a lover, as you know of words, and so I go into the original language and there is a very specific word that Paul uses for the verb "put on shoes." In Greek, that word is hypodeo. Hypodeo. If you're reading it in English, it looks like it's hypo-dayo. In the English transliteration, we know hypo rather than hippo much better because we hear words like hypodermic. It's giving an injection usually or doing something under the skin. So hypodeo is a combination. It's a compound verb of two words hypo, which is a prefix and deo. The word deo literally means to bind. And the word hippo or hypo means under. So literally, when you're looking at hypodeo which is the Greek word for shoes, it literally means to bind under.

This is the Roman soldier (Figure 1) fully decked out in the armor that was typical for the Roman guard. And at the very bottom of the picture, you'll see that he's got on what looks like sandals to us. But back then they were boots. That was what they wore. In Latin, because it's Roman, they called them the caligae. These were thick soled. They were laced on foot and ankle with leather thongs, and they were hobnailed for traction in very difficult terrain.



*Figure 1 - Armor of God*



*Figure 2: Hobnobbed Caligae (aka gladiator sandals)*

What's hobnailed mean? Well literally, this is a visual image (Figure 2) of that. Those are nails that are embedded in the soles of these particular shoes. They're hobnailed for a reason to gain traction in difficult terrain. So, hold on to that image for just a brief moment, and let's look at the translation again. This is why I'm thinking. Paul all along has been teaching us that we are called to stand when in this spiritual battle, the enemy is trying to beat us, tempt us, lure us in, to fight the battle on our own terms. He wants us to engage him so that we will lose.

Paul says, I want you to stand firm, stand your ground because you don't have to fight. The battle has already been fought and the battle has already been won. Jesus is already

victorious, and so all along in this series, we have been learning to remember who we are and to remember what God has already done. Today is no exception. So in this verse of scripture, if we look at what the NRSV and others have translated, then possibly we have the translation that says, "Be ready to share the gospel of peace." Nothing wrong with that, as I indicated. That's our job. However, if within this context, we believe that Paul the Apostle is telling us and equipping us to stand our ground, then the other way of translating this is to be firmly footed in the gospel of peace so that we can stand secure in the battles with the enemy. The shoes enable us to stand and to stand in the quicksand of our turmoil to stand firm. And we stand firm because we stand in the peace of Jesus Christ. That's what Paul says in my translation. And having put on your feet, the shoes of readiness in the gospel of peace. In the gospel of Peace.

Let me give you a little bit more behind that that phrase, the gospel of peace. It's actually referencing not what we do, but what God has already done. It is what God has done on the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus, by virtue of giving himself sacrificially for us, has purchased at great price, the restored relationship with God. That's what we have as the gospel of peace. What God has already done for us. If I were to look at this in the larger context of the Apostle Paul, I'm immediately drawn to Romans Chapter 5:1-5. Romans 5:1-5 have become for me over the years one of my all time favorite passages of scripture. In fact, I have recited these words to myself over the years in any moments of high anxiety and I got to be honest with you, I've quoted this passage numerous times over the past two years. What does it say? Glad you asked, this is what it says,

***"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. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us***

***to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." [Romans 5:1-5 NIV].***

Incredible words. This is the same Apostle Paul, who wrote Ephesians 6:10-20 in my opinion. Now keep in mind, Paul in writing Ephesians is writing from a jail cell. He is in prison. He is literally in chains. And what does he have before him? He has the image of the Roman guard. He knows that image, certainly as Bible scholars, smarter than me have pointed out in many, many commentaries, Paul is less inclined to focus in on the Roman guard and more inclined to quote from the scriptures of the Old Testament. Yes, totally agree. Paul was a Bible scholar. He was a Pharisee. He certainly knew his scriptures. But Paul was also a preacher. Being a preacher, I cannot help but believe that Paul took advantage of every opportunity and every object lesson that was in front of him to tell the story contextually so that those who were hearing it for the first time would be able to connect to the images that he was using. And what image did he have? He had the Roman guard.

So, in the midst of his imprisonment, he's telling the story about where our peace really comes from. In the midst of all of the terrains of difficulty and turmoil, how do we get our faith hobnobbed so that we can stand our ground? This is what Paul says back in those first few verses. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul is telling us that our peace is not a fleeting thing that we have in any given moment because of the nature of our circumstances. Our peace comes to us from a single event in history, and that event was the cross of Jesus Christ. An event in history that was relatively recent for Paul and for those of us a little bit longer ago. But that single event in history is the marker by which we have peace. Because it is bought, that peace, by God himself, through what Jesus gave on the cross. We have peace with God because of what Jesus did. And when we say yes to what Jesus did, when we confess, what Jesus did was for us personally as well as for all of us corporately, that makes us justified by faith.

Then Paul says, "through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace," here it is, "in which we now stand. We stand our ground on the peace that was purchased for us by Jesus Christ himself." Our peace does not come from our circumstances. Our piece comes within our circumstances by virtue of what God himself has done. Then, Paul says, "and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings." Whoa. Glory in our sufferings. I don't know about you, but this trips me up all the time. I am not quick to praise God when I suffer. Paul is. Doesn't mean that Paul is not in his humanness, struggling. We read elsewhere and one of his other letters that he struggles with an issue what he called his thorn in the flesh, he struggled with that. He prayed that God would relieve him of that over and over. And God said, "My grace is sufficient." So, we know that in his humanness, he grappled, he wrestled with himself and with his own issues of emotions. But apart from that and within it he put his assurance on the peace that was bought on the Cross of Christ. And that's where he got his hope, his hope for what is yet to be experienced, his hope for what is yet to be realized. It gives him the courage to face into the future, unafraid. Because he trusts the one who redeems all things. The one who owns the future. And then he says, yeah, because we know that our suffering produces perseverance and perseverance, character and character, hope and that word

perseverance, many of you have heard me share this word before. Guess what? It's another compound verb to persevere in Greek. It's the word *hypomeno*. Again, there's that prefix *hypo* under and *meno*, which means to remain. And so to persevere literally is to remain under the weight of whatever it is that we're facing. To remain under it. And what Paul is saying is when we're dealing with sufferings that suffering produces, produces that endurance, that perseverance and when we persevere, when we remain under, God uses, it works it redemptively to shape and equip our character and our character always in Christ leads us to hope.

It's amazing the words that he is using very intentionally to communicate where our peace comes from. And then he says our hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. This image comes to my mind every time I read these words that Paul uses, that God's love has been poured out into our hearts. Picture this with me. You have a standard size eight-ounce glass, and you have a 32-ounce pitcher filled with water. And so, you take that pitcher of water, and you start pouring it into the eight-ounce glass until the glass is full and you keep pouring. And now the water is bubbling over top of the edge of the glass and cascading down onto the table and then onto the floor and you keep pouring because you got all 32 ounces of water that are yet to come out. All 32 ounces come out of the pitcher, and you are bathing, bathing in the water. Metaphorically speaking when I read these words that God's love has been poured out. I get that image of God's love overflowing in every way our capacity to receive it. That's how huge a gift of love and grace that God has given to us. He has poured out His love into our hearts through the vehicle of the Holy Spirit. That's how He has gifted us with such an abundance of that love. He has given us this great price.

Friends, the peace of God was obtained at a great price. That shows us how much God loves us. It shows us how much God loves us. So much that He abundantly poured it out into us. Peace is a gift of God. His presence has promise, His provision, they're all given within the trials, temptations, and terrors of life. God doesn't wait for everything to be peaceful. He is our peace. And in the midst of our challenges, in the midst of our brokenness, in the midst of our trials, in the midst of our temptations, in the midst of everything that we are facing. God gives us Himself. And there is our peace. Makes me think of the wonderful hymn. It Is Well with My Soul. Some of you know that hymn, some of you have sung that hymn numerous times. You know the words because you've lived them. You know the tune because you've heard it and in the old style of the hymns or the contemporary versions as it's been remade. But do you know the back story? We want to share with you a brief backstory. It Is Well with My Soul.

When peace like a river attendeth my way. When sorrows like a sea billows roll. Whatever my lot thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul. Peace and sorrow. We live at times in great tension between these two states. Peace and sorrow. While this life amid human brokenness is at times wrought with sorrow, peace like a river flows. Horatio Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago in the 1860s and early 1870s. However, in 1871, the Great Chicago Fire, which destroyed 3.3 square miles of the crowded city and killed 300 people, decimated Spafford's fortune. And then what was left of his financial resources was later strained yet again in the Great Economic Recession of 1873. After two full years of economic stress, the toll of

which was felt by Horatio and his wife, Anna, Spafford planned a family trip to England where they would join Dwight Moody, a well-known evangelist, as he ministered to the people in England. A last-minute business issue came up in Chicago as the Spafford family prepared for their journey to England. Horatio stayed and Anna, along with Spafford's four daughters, traveled ahead of him aboard a passenger ship to England. Sadly, the ship that Anna and Spafford's four children were traveling on sank to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean when it collided with another ship. All four Spafford children perished. Anna was rescued and later landed in Scotland, where she said Horatio, the now famous telegram simply stating, "Saved alone. What shall I do?" You can imagine how in just a short time, sorrow must have felt to Horatio Spafford like a constant wave after wave rushing and crashing ashore endlessly, one after another.

As Horatio crossed the Atlantic Ocean to be reunited with his wife crossing the same waters that took his four children in deep mourning and reflection, he came to the ultimate conclusion, it is well, the will of God be done. Now, three years later, back in Chicago, the Spafford's hosted noted gospel composer Ira Sankey at their home. In deep mourning and in memory of his children and in the company of Ira Sankey, Horatio penned these words that we now know is the hymn, It Is Well. Sankey so moved by Horatio's words, shared them with composer Philip Bliss, who wrote the tune now associated with the hymn and it was first sang in public by Ira Sankey at a gathering of ministers in November of 1876. It Is Well can now be found printed in hymnals all over the world. As you look to the words of this hymn printed in the hymnals here at St. Paul's Church, do you notice how each verse elevates our perspective higher and higher? Indeed, from our sorrow and peace to the great sacrifice Christ made on the cross for our sins to the glorious day that He returns, we will say it is well, it is well with my soul. Peace and sorrow, both are present in the context of the Christian life, and both point us to Christ. Spafford's hymn, written amid deep anguish and at the absolute lowest point of a man's life, has become an anthem of generations of Christians because it shows how our sorrow and our peace point to the love of Jesus. It is well, it is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul. So, I have a question for all of us. The question is - what shoes are you wearing? What shoes are you wearing? Let's pray.

*God of love and grace, thank You for all that You have given to us on the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is by your grace that we have that peace which passes all understanding Lord. I pray that You would continually remind us that we stand on the assurance of all of what You have done, and we stand in the midst of our trials, in the midst of our struggles, in the midst of our brokenness, in the midst of our terrors that come by day or by night, regardless of our circumstances. Lord, we stand, and we stand firm because our faith is embedded in a single event and time that occurred over 2000 years ago on the cross of Jesus Christ. Because of that thought we have peace and that peace, oh, nothing, no weapon of the enemy can steal it away. Thank You, Lord. We pray this in Jesus' name and all God's people said, Amen.*