

A Peaceful Readiness

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- [0 : 0 0] Ephesians chapter 6, the miseries of the Continental Army in Valley Forge during the winter of 1777 and 1778 is a history that has remained with me since I first heard it in elementary school.
- How cold it was and how miserable they were. Since then, the more I've read, the more I've felt sorry for them in the midst of what they did to establish America.
- They got their footwear from the French and it was low quality and it was too small. And once it worn out, a third of the soldiers didn't have any shoes.
- None of them had winter shoes and it was cold and traction was rough unless without snowshoes. It was a problem during those wintry days.
- Some of them had made their own rough-hewn moccasins and General George Washington ordered rawhides and offered a reward for a makeshift cobbler that could help them to have better shoes.
- [1 : 1 4] They added heel plates to some, hobnails to others and that helped. However, I'll just be honest, it was horrible. Many marched in ice and snow shoeless.
- Frostbite was epidemic. Feet froze, legs froze until they were black. Amputations were necessary. Amputations were done with a saw, a leather strap, and something to knock the edge off.
- Took about seven minutes to do the average amputation. Although to me, it don't sound like any amputation was average. You only had a 35% chance of survival after undergoing that surgery.
- I said all that to say good footwear is important. And it is not only in the continental wars that it's important, but it's also important in the spiritual wars.
- And I want you to notice what Paul says about today's piece of armor. I want to remind you what we're looking at is the armor of God. In Ephesians chapter 6, it is six symbolic pieces of the armor of God.
- [2 : 3 3] And today, we look at the third one. It's found in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 15. I'll read 14 to put it in context. And it says, Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.
- We're talking in this passage about a Roman soldier's battle wear. Soldiers of that day wore thick-soled, like a half-sandal, half-boot, toeless, heel-less, leather boot.
- It had hobnails coming out the bottom of the sole of the shoe so that it made for a cleat. And it provided a firm foundation, at least as firm as they could in that day.
- Paul compared it to the gospel of Jesus Christ, our source of peace. Anytime you see the word peace in Scripture, whether it be the Hebrew version of Shalom, or whether it be in the Greek in the New Testament, either way, peace speaks of wholeness.
- It speaks of completeness. It's not really an absence of conflict. It's the fact that you have all that you need in the midst of whatever you face. And the reality is that no one can really find true peace without the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.

- [4 : 03] Without Him, in other words, you are not whole. Without Him, you are not sound, even though you may think you are. And this is what he tells about the life-changing gospel.
- Now, the question I had for years was why did he compare the gospel to shoes? Where did that come from? Let me give you some ideas of where that came from.
- For one is, you need to be securely footed. You need to be securely footed. The gospel of John is the most evangelical gospel that we have, the most evangelistic gospel that we have.
- He writes about Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, and that leads to probably the most popular passage of Scripture in the Bible, John 3.16. He writes about the seven I am statements of Christ that tell us what we get when we get Jesus.
- He tells us about the lady who was caught in adultery that Jesus forgave and set free. He talks about the truth setting us free.
- [5 : 13] He talks about the raising of Lazarus. He talks about Christ being the resurrection and the life. And he finishes up his book by saying in John 20, verse 30 and 31, Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.
- But get this, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. The only thing that follows that is the resurrection of Christ.
- In the New Testament, there is one big John, that's the gospel of John, and three little Johns. First John, second John, and third John. And he also writes the book of Revelation without an S on the end of it, by the way.
- And the largest of his three letters, first John, second John, and third John, is first John, which he concludes with first John 5, verse 13 when it says, I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.
- John is emphasizing to us over and over again that he's writing to lead people to Christ and to help people to be securely footed in Christ. In other words, we need to know that we know that we know the Lord.
- [6 : 37] Knowing that you're saved is the greatest gift that God can give you outside of salvation itself, quite honestly. And I can't help but think that as he writes the gospel of John, as he writes the three letters of John, and as he talks about those things, I can't help but think that he's probably thinking about that time, that he and Peter healed a lame man in the name of Jesus at the gate called Beautiful.
- And they were hauled in before the Sanhedrin because of that, the high priests, the rulers, the elders, and the scribes, and they were asked, where do you get this power from?
- And they responded and said it came from Jesus. And then they said this in Acts 4, verse 12, And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.
- They were clear. And John wants it to be clear. Salvation starts with Christ. We need to know that we're saved. Knowing that you know you're saved is the greatest gift you can have in life.
- And if you'll give a heartfelt plea to the Lord to save you, to forgive you, and to change you, you can have a confidence this morning that that's exactly what he'll do.
- [7 : 52] The greatest gift that could be given is salvation. The greatest miracle that could be performed is salvation. He takes the dirty and makes it clean. He takes the condemned and makes it forgiven.
- He takes the temporal and makes it eternal. It's the greatest prayer that you could pray. And you can ask God for more, you ask God for more when you ask him to save you than any other thing that you ask of him.

Now I want you to remember that. When you ask God to save you, you ask him for more than anything else you could ever ask. And he answers it more swiftly than any other prayer.

1 John 5, 14 and 15 says this, And this is the confidence that we have toward you, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request that we've asked of him.

Now listen, there's a lot I don't understand about the economy of God. There's a lot I don't understand on why he allows certain things to happen and why he moves in this particular way and why this happens and all those things.

[8 : 56] There's a lot about that I don't understand. But I know this, and I say it with authority of the word of God. If you'll ask the Lord Jesus to save you, and you mean that in committing your life to Christ, his will is to save you.

If you ask him to save you, he hears your prayer. If you ask him to save you in your heartfelt and surrendering your life, he will save you.

You need to know that you're saved. Not only that, but you also need to know that he loves you, and he forgives us, thank God. He loves us, and he forgives us. We are sinners, and we are messed up.

And don't look haughty at me this morning. I'm speaking to every last one of you. We are. We're sinners, and we're messed up. And we may feel alienated from God and broken in our relationship with God.

Even if we know we're saved, in reality, because of things in our life, we may feel broken about that. We may not be where we want to be with the Lord at this time. But I want you to know something.

[10 : 04] God hadn't went anywhere. He hadn't moved a muscle. If we're distant from God, it's because we've moved, not because he's moved. He'll always be faithful.

1 John 1, 9 says, If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I love this passage of Scripture.

I love it. And the reason why I love it, because it says he's faithful. That means that he's willing to do it. And it says that he's just. That means he can do it.

Listen, friend, if he was willing but couldn't, we'd be in a mess. And if he could but wouldn't, we'd be in a mess. But he can and he will. And because of that, he forgives of our sins.

But I love the last phrase the best. And that is to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If I were to hand out a sheet of paper this morning and a pen and ask you to write your sins down, okay?

[11 : 01] Well, one, there's not enough paper in pickings for us to write down our sins, okay? And we're not going to stay here that long this morning to write them all down. But if we wrote down everything that we could think of, just between us and God, write down our sins.

And I encourage you when you confess your sins, confess them by name. Write them down if necessary. Be serious about asking God to forgive you. Be seriously sorry for your sins.

But if we were to write every one last thing down, every word that we said, every thought that we thought, everything that we did, we were to write it all down. I got news for you. We'd be missing a bunch.

And the reason why is because we've got so good at sinning, we don't even think about it much anymore. There's some things in our life that we're so good at that we don't even think of it as that anymore. And that's why I like that last phrase.

Because if we sincerely seek the Lord and ask Him to forgive us and to cleanse us and we really lay out our sins before the Lord, I encourage you to name them before the Lord. Give them to Him and ask God to forgive you and tell you how sorry you are for it.

[12 : 09] And how you want to walk away from it and want to repent from it and never do it again. Lay those things out before the Lord. And anything you miss along the way, thank God, He'll cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He's the one that wipes the slate clean. He's the one that takes care of it. He just loves us like that. John 14 verse 18 says, I will not leave you as orphans. I'll come to you.

Listen, friend. That was when Jesus was about to ascend into glory too. I mean, He was about to go to the cross first. But then 40 days later, after He rose, He would be ascended. And He was telling those disciples what it's going to be like when I'm not physically in your presence.

I will not leave you alone. I'm not going to leave you comfortless. I'll come to you. That's a promise not only for them but for us as well. Not only that, but in that same chapter in verse 27, He said, Peace I leave with you.

My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled. Neither let them be afraid. You may say, I don't feel like God loves me.

[13 : 08] Or I don't feel like He'll forgive me. I got news for you. God's love and grace and mercy is not based upon your feelings. Thank God it's not. But it's not based upon our feelings.

It's based upon the cross of Christ. Which is a done deal. And all we have to do is ask and surrender. And once we do that, we are blessed with eternal life.

We need to know that we have eternal life. And as I've shared, that's why the Gospels were written. It is a Gospel of peace that was given to us so that we could have a secure footing.

Listen, my friend. If you're here today and you've never surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, or there's a doubt in your mind that you're struggling, whether in reality you've ever truly committed your life to Christ today, don't you dare leave this place without nailing that down.

You need secure footing in Christ. Everything else I'm going to tell you won't apply to you. Unless you're securely footed in Christ, you need to know the Lord Jesus.

[14 : 21] You need to surrender your life to Him. Give Him all that you are, and He'll make you everything that He'd have you to be. But not only does it stop there, but I believe He brings up these shoes of the Gospel because we also need to be firmly standing.

We need to be firmly standing. Let's not forget that we're speaking of spiritual warfare here. We're on attack by the enemy. And if we don't stand firm, we'll fall to one of His attacks.

And a few weeks ago, I talked about His attacks. I call them the demoralizing devices of the devil. And I want to revisit just a few of those just so you'll see how you need to stand firm, how you need to make sure that you hold your ground.

One way He does it is He deceives us. He uses deception. And Paul warned the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 11.3. He said this, But I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Why? Because He seeks to deceive us. You know how sometimes when somebody's talking to you, and as they're talking to you, you know they're lying. I mean, you know they are.

[15 : 35] You ask them some question and they start talking. I mean, there might be some people that when their mouth is moving, they're lying. You know, you never know. But there's sometimes when you're talking to somebody, and you know good and well what they're telling you is not the truth.

Whether you confront them with that or not, you just kind of get that sense. Well, that feeling that you get. I'm going to tell you something.

Listen, if you'll walk faithfully with the Lord, and you'll trust His Word, and you'll take it in, the Holy Spirit will help us discern lying thoughts.

Because the evil one will pepper us with stuff that ain't true. And we'll believe it if we're not careful. If we're not grounded in God's Word, if we're not standing firm, we'll believe that mess.

And it may not be anything anybody else says to us. It may be something somebody else says to us. Because I promise you, He inundates what we hear today in our world. He inundates what we hear from other people.

[16 : 52] He does. But sometimes it don't take nobody else. It's just in our own head. He loves to mess with us like that. I call it the sweet nothings of the evil one, you know. He loves to whisper those things to us.

You know how you know those things? You know what's truth and what's not, what's deceiving? It's by listening to the Holy Spirit, help you discern the lying thoughts that come up.

I'll tell you another way He does it. And it all correlates together, and I'll bring it together in a minute. And that's darkening. And I don't know how else to put this. That's what Scripture calls it, and that's what it is.

The Word of God sheds light on things. If you don't understand the darkness of this world and what in the world is going on, read God's Word. He'll tell you what's going on. He will.

It just sheds light on things, you know. It's like walking in a dark room and cutting the light on, seeing what happens, you know. And the evil one tries to confuse and distort the Word, and that darkens the mind.

[17 : 58] Therefore, we have to make a decision. As believers, we have to decide, are we going to let the winds of change and cultural trends determine what we believe? Or are we going to stick to God's Word?

Because God's Word's a timeless, perfect guide. I want you to hear what the Apostle Paul told Timothy, young Timothy. He said in 2 Timothy chapter 4, For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off in the myths.

You know what, friend? We're living in that day. We're living in that day, and I don't want you to fall for it. He'll darken. But not only that, but he'll cause doubt. He causes doubts about our salvation.

That's why I spent so much time on that first part. We need to nail that down, get it nailed down, and then once you've got it nailed down, know that you know that you know that you saved, and then don't go back and rehearse that.

The devil will try to when you mess up. Don't you do that. If you're in the blood of the Lamb, if the cross of Christ has changed your life, your life has changed, period. Don't let him throw those doubts on you.

[19 : 07] Nail that thing down. And then he'll also give you doubts about the faithfulness of God. I mean, where's God in all this? And I'm just telling you, you need to take him at his word.

You need to take him at his word because he's worthy to be trusted. He's worthy of it. And let me just tell you, if this is all you get every week, you ain't getting enough.

I mean, I'll try my best. I'll try my best to share with you what God's word says. And I'll beg you to apply it to your life and to watch God move and work in a mighty way.

But I'm telling you, if you leave this place at 1130 or if I hold you a little late, a little later, and you walk out of here and you don't spend any time with the Lord during the week and you don't spend any time in God's word during the week and you come back next Sunday looking for something special, I got news for you and it ain't gonna last long.

It's like there's a big old hole in your tire and the air will just seep right out pretty quick. By the time Monday morning rolls around, he'll smack you in the face. It won't feel like you've been to church at all on Sunday.

[20 : 28] You need to take in the word of God. You need to have a plan in your life and a pattern in your life to spend time in God's word and spend time in prayer for God.

You need a touch of the Lord Jesus every day of your life. And when you do that and spend time with him and those doubts come up, you can just remember what you just read and put your trust in the word of God.

Now, if you don't know the word of God, it's hard to trust in it. But if you spend time in it, he'll give you a word. I believe he gives you a verse every day that you can hang your hat on. That's another sermon for another day. But I'm just telling you, he'll work in that.

You know, and you'll have doubts about tomorrow. Some of you are so worried about tomorrow, you can't think about today. What's coming tomorrow? What's coming tomorrow? Listen, I've got news for you. I don't know what tomorrow holds, but I know who holds tomorrow.

And I'm arresting that. I mean, I am. I am. Today's got enough troubles of its own. And I ain't the first one that said that. That was Jesus talking. Not only that, but he'll cause division.

[21 : 36] And I want you to hear me. Satan would love to disrupt the good work that God's doing in somebody's life. He loves to do that. If you're striving to grow in the Lord, don't you dare be confused when something comes along your path that messes you up.

Don't you dare be confused by that. He loves to disrupt somebody's life. Tell you what else he loves to do. He loves to divide the home. The home is on attack by the evil one.

And he loves to divide the home. And you need to remember something. We don't fight against flesh and blood. We're not fighting people in our family. That's not what we're doing.

It's the evil one. He's messing with us and we're letting him and we're blaming each other for it. He'll divide the home. Not only that, but he loves to bring division in the church.

He does. What better way to cool down the fire of the Holy Spirit working in the church by bringing division among them. He'd love to do that.

[22 : 40] And do you know what really sets him off? I'll tell you what really sets him off. A growing church that's studying the schemes of the evil one. Boy, that's a recipe for the evil one to raise up his head.

He don't like his mess. He don't want to be exposed. He don't want you to know what the Word of God says. He loves to do that. It's real turf. It's a real thing, my friend.

Let's be careful what we say. Let's be careful what we do. Let's be careful why we say it. Let's be careful why we do it. Because listen, it's all about him.

It ain't about us. It's about him. And so let's do what pleases the Lord. He loves to divide. Not only that, he loves to distract. He loves to use distraction.

Watch what catches your eye. Watch it. Watch what grabs your attention. Be careful. Watch what takes up your time. Be careful.

[23 : 38] Even good things can come in the way of what God wants to do in our life. And the devil would love to distract us from God's very best for our lives. We need to be securely footed. We need to know that we know.

We need to be standing firm. The devil's on attack. Plant your feet. But don't miss the thrust of this passage. Because the thrust of this passage is not really about being securely footed.

It's not really about standing firm. I'll tell you what the real thrust of this passage is. Having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

We don't just need the firm grip to stand in one place. We need to work the gospel. We need to work it. It is our greatest defense against the advancement of the enemy is the gospel.

And my friend, we need boots on the ground. We need to be fervently sharing Christ. Fervently sharing Christ.

[24 : 40] Now some of you are thinking, preacher, you done got to meddling now. You know? But I want you to hear me. When we're grounded with the gospel, we got to carry on with the gospel and take it with us as we go.

In Acts chapter 8, Philip followed the Holy Spirit's lead. Church was scattered. Due to persecution, it was intense. And Philip went to Samaria and preached the gospel and the crowds paid attention and they were one in accord.

It's what Scripture says. And when God told him, when God told Philip to go to Gaza Road, he didn't know why he was going to Gaza Road, but he went there. And a man from Ethiopia rode in a chariot and was searching the Scriptures for answers.

And the Spirit of God told Philip to go to that chariot and ask him if he knew what he was reading. And he was reading the book of Isaiah and he didn't understand it.

And Philip went on to share the gospel with him and baptize him right there on the spot because he followed the Holy Spirit's lead. In Acts chapter 9, Ananias just did what he was told. He didn't want to go to Straight Street.

[25 : 48] He didn't want to go see Saul, the one who persecuted believers. But he went in obedience and he laid hands on Saul and Saul's sight came back and he was filled with the Holy Spirit of God and the world was changed by the gospel because Ananias just did what he was told to do.

Every time somebody gets saved, the devil loses another. And I want you to think about how many did Satan lose through the ministry of the Apostle Paul sharing the gospel just following the Spirit's lead.

Only heaven knows. People continue to be changed by the gospel because of Paul's writings and because of his ministry.

God does mighty things when we're equipped and we're ready with the gospel. Melvin Carter, just a regular old guy, but he had a burden. He had a burden for a young man that he knew that worked in a shoe shop and he prayed for that young man, had a burden for that young man and went to see him one day as God led him.

He got outside that shoe shop and he was nervous and so he was pacing back and forth in front of it, asking God to work in that young man's life, asking God to give him the courage. Lord, what in the world am I going to say?

[27 : 07] What am I going to do? And finally he walked in there. He asked the man at the counter if the young man was there. He said he's back in the storeroom.

Walk on back there. And he walked back there and the young man that he came to see was up on a ladder messing with shoes. When he went, 18 years old and he was sorting those shoes and Melvin stood at the bottom of that ladder and told him he'd come to share Christ with him.

The young man came down the steps of that ladder and Melvin told him how he could pray and give his heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ and then invited him to come to Christ and he did.

Right there in the stockroom of a shoe store, Dwight L. Moody gave his life to the Lord. And not only was his life changed that day, but many others were changed because he was changed.

If you go to Scully Square in Boston, there's a plaque there that says D.L. Moody, Christian evangelist, friend of man, founder of the Northfield schools was converted to God in a shoe store on this site, April 21st, 1855.

[28 : 20] Let me tell you about D.L. Moody. He later started Sunday school classes to teach children about Christ. Held noon prayer meetings at the YMCA to lead folks to Christ and then he became a traveling evangelist that traveled the world preaching.

He preached to more than a hundred million people, over 130,000 in one day and he preached six times one day, a month before, six sermons one day, a month before he died.

D.L. Moody preached and personally counseled a man named J. Welber Chapman and J. Welber Chapman got saved and became a preacher of the gospel and upon, under Chapman, worked a young man named Billy Sunday and Billy Sunday had went on to become a powerful evangelist later, winning thousands to the Lord in the 1920s and the 1930s.

The grassroots revival that he led was absolutely amazing. He also led businessman luncheons in Charlotte and those businessman luncheons in Charlotte was instrumental in inviting Mordecai Ham to Charlotte to preach and when Mordecai Ham was in Charlotte to preach, a young man walked down the aisle and gave his life to the Lord Jesus and his name was Billy Graham.

Now listen, I could say that that story started with a man on a Boston street with a burden for a shoe store worker but the reality is it started before that because Melvin Carter didn't start that.

[29 : 48] Somebody shared with Melvin Carter. And when Melvin Carter got the Lord Jesus, he got a burden for others and thank God it didn't stop with Billy Graham either because as you well know, he led thousands, maybe millions to the Lord.

He preached to 215 million live and millions of others, including us, have watched reruns of his sermons on television that the Holy Spirit could use as well.

God just keeps changing lives but it came because somebody was ready to share the gospel with somebody else. And the advancing power of the gospel brings everlasting peace.

It brings victory in the midst of a war-turned world that we live in. So church, I ask you today, are you securely footed?

Do you know that you know that you know? Are you firmly standing? Are you fervently sharing?

[30 : 59] I believe in the power of the gospel. I encourage you to as well. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I ask you this morning, have you ever given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus?

He'll save you today if you'll surrender your life to him. We're going to stand in just a moment and we're going to sing and if you've never given your heart and life to the Lord, you come. You come. Maybe you've done that privately but you've never acknowledged that publicly through baptism.

If so, I believe it's the first step of obedience to follow Christ. You come. We'd love to line that up for you and arrange that. Maybe God's leading you to be a part of this church. God's blessed us mightily and I know that God's working in lives and so if God's leading you, you come.

We'd love to guide you in that process but maybe like the majority of us, you're just one who might be struggling with standing firm on something. You may not be fervently sharing.

There may not even be one person on your heart and life today to share the gospel with and if that be the case, I encourage you in the next few moments to just ask God to give you somebody.

[32 : 13] Lord, give me somebody that I can share my faith with. Not only does that person have the opportunity to know more of Christ and to possibly come to the Lord, but I promise you, you'll be stronger from having shared it.

I don't have a clue what God's telling you to do, but I know you'll never be happy unless you do exactly the way to have you do. Lord Jesus, lead and work right now in our midst. Have your will and your way in every life in this place.

Every person that watches online, Lord, work and move as only you can right now, oh God, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Hey, you're welcome, Eddie Smith.

Wait, this balance, when you come of me, you're welcome, yes. Get back to work, they ain't nothing. I pray for you, great statements.