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The Christian's Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-20

7. Put on Your Boots & Pick Up Your Shield

In the capitol legislators and leaders are often well known for the stands they take on various issues. Name a lawmaker, and it is likely that, agree or disagree, you can name the things they stand for and support.

Followers of Christ are called to take a stand. This is first and foremost a stand on the truth of the gospel. It is a stand in the face of the spiritual attacks that are faced each day.

When we consider the armor and equipment of a soldier, nothing is more important to their ability to stand and engage in the conflict than their footwear. This allows them to move to engage the enemy and stand firm as they fight. It is also vital that a soldier have cover from enemy fire. This is why Paul challenges believers to "Put on your boots and pick up your shield".

Three times Paul challenges us in his illustration of the believer's warfare to "Stand Firm":

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph. 6:10-20)

As we consider each piece of armor God has provided for us, we see that each one represents some aspect or facet of gospel truth and how we apply it to our lives. We can look at Ephesians 1-3 and see Paul teaching these truths. In our passage Paul is using a wonderfully creative illustration to practically apply these truths to our lives.

Put On Your Boots

We now come to a vital piece of equipment, the soldier's footwear. Paul exhorts us to "**stand**

firm...having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace".

The Roman soldier's footwear helped the Roman army become the greatest fighting force up to that time and conquer most of the known world. They were equipped with a heavy-duty sandal or half-boot that featured a heavy sole embedded with metal studs or cleats. It fastened securely around the ankle with thick straps. This footwear provided mobility as it allowed the legions to quickly cover great distances often surprising unprepared enemy forces. They provided protection as injuries to the feet would render a soldier useless in battle. They provided stability and balance as the soldier engaged the enemy in combat.

Paul says the believer is to "shod their feet" or "put on the boots" of the "preparation of the gospel of peace". We must once again consider what spiritual lesson Paul has for us from this illustration.

Many say Paul is referring to the believer's readiness to go out and share the good news of the gospel with others. While this is certainly important, and something believers are commanded to do, this does not seem to fit in with the context of what Paul is teaching us here. Paul is talking about what provides our defense and ability to stand in the face of spiritual conflict. Paul is saying that it is our understanding, accepting, and believing in the gospel of peace that provides protection and stability in our lives.

Paul wrote of this in Ephesians 2. Paul there teaches us we were "dead in trespasses and sins"

(2:1). We followed Satan, “the prince of the power of the air” (2:2). We lived in the lust of our flesh and were enemies of God and under His judgment (2:3). We were separated from God, far off from Him, “without hope and without God in the world (2:12). But Paul writes that when we trust in Christ, “you who were formerly far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, For He Himself is our peace...” (2:13-14). We are reconciled to God through the cross, as He has done away with the enmity between us and God. Jesus is described as having come and “preached peace to you who were far away...” (2:17). Paul clearly teaches this as well in Romans 5:1

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is our belief, acceptance, and faith in this gospel truth of the peace we have with God that provides us protection and stability as we engage in the spiritual battles we face.

Pick Up Your Shield

We should note the distinction Paul makes between the first three pieces of armor and the last three. With the first three Paul uses “having”: having girded; having put on; having shod. This speaks of permanency, the things we put on and keep on in our readiness for spiritual conflict. With the next three Paul urges us to “take up”. These are the equipment and weapons God has provided for us to pick up when we know we are facing the attacks from the evil one.

Paul describes for us another important piece of armor. He urges us to ***“...take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”***.

The Roman soldier’s shield spoken of here was large enough to protect nearly his whole body. It was made of thick wood with an outer layer of leather or metal. As the legion went into battle, a line of troops carrying these shields could stand in front. As they advanced, these shields would protect them from the enemy’s archers, who would often dip their arrows in flammable materials and set them afire. Behind this wall of protection, the army could move forward to engage the enemy in hand to hand combat as the shields stopped and extinguished the enemy’s arrows.

What is Paul telling us with this vivid illustration about our faith in God? This is first and foremost our faith in God Himself. It is our faith that points us to the character and nature of God. It is our faith that points us to the promises of God we find in His word.

Our faith points us to the power of God. Perhaps most important of all, our faith points us to Christ’s great love for us and all His work on our behalf. Once again, these are all truths Paul described for us in Ephesians 1-3.

“Taking up the shield of faith” is our ability to quickly apply what we believe in order to repel whatever the devil attempts to do to us. It is the quick application of what we believe as an answer to everything Satan might hurl at us.

M.L Jones

Satan’s fiery darts may include sinful, even blasphemous thoughts. Temptations. Doubts. Discouragement and depression. Attacks and persecutions from others. Perhaps even personal loss, disasters, and illness such as Job faced. It is when we face such attacks, we need faith in God in God Himself and in all truths of the gospel in order to stand.

While Paul does not directly make this application, as we consider how the Roman legions fought together using their shields, we learn an important lesson on how we can stand in our battles. The soldiers fought together using their shields to protect the unit as a whole. They provided protection for each other and found success only as they fought together. This reminds us how we need fellow believers to encourage, strengthen, and protect us in our battles. As Paul emphasizes the importance of prayer, he challenges us, ***“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints... (6:18)***. We are to pray for and encourage each other! This is primarily found in our involvement in a local church that preaches the gospel and teaches the Word of God. It is there we are prepared and equipped to face our spiritual battles. It is there we find encouragement and support in fighting together side by side with fellow believers. As you serve in the statehouse, I would encourage you to find the encouragement and support of fellow believers in the capitol.

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays,

8:00 AM McManus Conference Room (M252 by House Min Ofc)
12:00 PM Senate President’s Conference Room