

“Stand firm then... with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.” - Ephesians 6:14a...15

“The Right Shoes”

Luke 8:4-15; Ephesians 6:15

I. Satan hates the good news of the gospel (Luke 8:12), because it brings perfect peace to everyone who believes in Jesus:

1) Peace with God (Romans 5:1, 8:1; Isaiah 1:18)

2) Peace with circumstances (Philippians 4:6-7, 12-13)

3) Peace with others (Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 3:15)

II. Since Satan opposes the gospel, we are to have *“feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel”* to:

1) Refute the accusations of Satan with Scripture (Luke 4:1-13)

2) Present the basic biblical texts for the plan of salvation:

a) Man’s need: salvation (Romans 3:10f-20)

b) God’s provision: Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-24)

c) God’s requirement: faith in Jesus (John 6:28-29; Eph. 2:8-9)

3) Pray for doors of opportunity (Colossians 4:2-6)

4) Confess faith before others (Romans 10:9; Matthew 10:32-33) and live a life that speaks louder than words (2 Cor. 3:2-3)

“The Right Shoes”

Ephesians 6:15; Luke 8:4-15

The hymn we just sang, “*We Have Heard the Joyful Sound: Jesus saves! Jesus Saves!*” is one of the hymns that Satan perhaps hates the most. He not only hates Christ, and those who follow after Him with saving faith, he also hates the “gospel of peace,” that is, the good news that there is salvation from sin through faith in Jesus Christ.

We certainly see the hatred of the evil one toward the gospel of salvation in the parable of the sower. Jesus records that parable for us in several gospels, including our Scripture reading this morning from Luke 8:4-15. This is the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God:

“⁴While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: ⁵“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.”

When he said this, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

⁹ His disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰ He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,

*“‘though seeing, they may not see;
though hearing, they may not understand.’*

¹¹ “This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. ¹⁴ The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. ¹⁵ But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

We read this by way of background to our text: “*Stand firm then... with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace*” (Ephesians 6:14a, 15).

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Verse 12 records how seed sown along the path represents the way the devil snatches the gospel away from many who hear it. They go on in their lives, unchanged.

Verse 13 describes seed on the rocky areas and how such seed has no root. Because that seed has no root it cannot withstand the trials that come when Satan does what he did to Job, bringing trial and hardship into an individual's life. Verse 14 describes how the seed sown among the thorns gets choked by the worries of life and also by riches and pleasure.

From the parable of the sower we begin to see some of the devices of the evil one against the gospel. He tries to squelch, ridicule, distort, even outlaw the gospel of peace. Why such hatred? Why does the gospel grate the evil one's ears? Satan hates the good news of the gospel, because it brings perfect peace to everyone who believes in Jesus.

Peace With God

First, the gospel brings peace with God. Last week, when we read from Zechariah 3, we saw where the name Satan means "Accuser." He loves to accuse Christians, just as we read in Zechariah 3 how he accused Joshua the high priest.

We can all relate to being accused, because we all know that we have sinned and are still sinners and will be until the day we die. But when Satan comes to accuse us, we have the assurance of Romans 5:1 *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..."* Romans 8:1 gives the same message: *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

Satan comes along and says: *"God doesn't love you. Look at your filthy rags, all your righteous deeds are like filthy rags in God's sight. His word even says that, Isaiah 64:6..."* But you and I, having that belt of truth around us, the knowledge of God's Word, the gospel of peace, can reply with confidence: *"...Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..."* And again, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

....So many other passages also assure us that although our sins be as scarlet, through faith in Christ they are made whiter than snow (Isaiah 1:18). That's one reason why the evil one hates the gospel of peace.

Peace With Circumstances

Another reason the devil hates the gospel of peace is that those who believe in Jesus can know true peace with circumstances, even the most trying, vexing, discouraging circumstances that life throws our way.

A few weeks ago, when we looked at the arsenal of the evil one, we saw his ability to bring pain and sorrow into the lives of believers. Specifically we looked at the life of Job and all that he suffered because of the evil one. You remember, Job was righteous and upright and the devil was out to prove that he could make Job curse God, by bringing all sorts of afflictions into his life.

Yet Job persevered. How did Job do that? How could he persevere with all the problems he faced? He certainly didn't persevere because his circumstances were ideal. All of his blessings were ruthlessly stripped from him, one after another, and to top it off, all his children died in a bizarre windstorm that blew down the house they were in.

Job didn't persevere because he had so much internal strength, either. His strength was sapped. He was covered with boils from head to toe and was afflicted physically, emotionally, and spiritually. How could Job possibly have peace in all those extremely trying circumstances of his life...?

The key is recorded in Job 19:25 where Job exclaims, *"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"*

How did Job persevere? How did he find a measure of peace in all the heart breaking circumstances of his life? He did so by looking in faith to His Redeemer, the Messiah, Christ our Lord.

And that is the same way that Christians today not only persevere but actually experience a peace that passes all understanding in all the hard, grueling circumstances of life. Philippians 4:12-13: *"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."*

I am not trying to lighten the dark clouds that surround many within our congregation. Some are in a hurricane of hard circumstances: unemployed, under-employed, on-going illnesses, impending surgeries, great loneliness in the loss of loved ones, and other unspoken heartaches that are just incredibly hard to bear.

I am not trying to make light of any of those circumstances. They are like a hurricane of problems, often all at once and out of the blue. But in the center of the hurricane, in the eye of the storm, there is an incredible calm and even a blue sky. In the center of the storms of life there is Christ, and when we focus on Him and bring our burdens to Him in prayer we have perfect peace. Philippians 4:6-7, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

We also sing about that in the beautiful hymn by Richard Havergal:

Like a river glorious, is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious, in its bright increase;
Perfect, yet it floweth, fuller every day,
Perfect, yet it groweth, deeper all the way.

(Refrain):

Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest
Finding, as He promised, perfect peace and rest.

No wonder the evil one hates the gospel of peace! It assures the believing sinner that he or she is justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and thus has peace with God. And it assures every Christian that there is indeed a peace which transcends all understanding in the eye of every storm, when we focus on the Lord.

Peace With Others

Third, the gospel brings peace with others. In the spiritual battle of the ages, the evil one tries to pit one Christian against another. How quickly he capitalizes on our natural inclination to see the speck in our brother's eye. Or to make a mountain out of a molehill. Or to say that one race of people is better than another.

The first century Jews were experts at that. They disdained the Gentiles, - that is, anyone who wasn't a Jew, - and the Romans, Greeks and other nationalities, in turn, disdained the Jews. But the power of the cross brings peace in those relationships, too. Ephesians 2:14: *"For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility..."*

No wonder Satan hates the gospel of peace! In a world filled with pain, sorrow, war, crime and hatred the Christian has good news. The Christian has peace with God, circumstances, and with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Refuting the Devil's Accusations

However, our text in Ephesians 6:15, not only speaks about the *"gospel of peace."* It prefaces it by saying that we must have *"feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."* What does the Apostle mean by that?

He means that when Satan accuses us we need to stand firm against those accusations by digging in our feet in the spiritual battle. Have you watched boxers or other professional fighters? They plant their feet, don't they? They know the opponent is going to be throwing their punches and in order to both duck at the right time and swing back offensively they need their feet planted firmly, solidly, in the best shoes money can buy.

Spiritually speaking it's the same way. The devil accuses, he throws his punches, he brings his accusations so convincingly, and we need to stand firm, remembering the promises of verses like Romans 5:1 and 8:1: *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1). And, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"*

(Romans 8:1). And we must plant our feet firmly, remembering verses like Isaiah 1:18, *“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”*

We must do the same when we face the cruel circumstances of life. We are to stand firm trusting that in the center of every storm that life may bring us there is Christ. And we dig in, trusting the promises of God, such as Philippians 4:6-7 *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

We can face whatever circumstance God permits in our lives with the certain knowledge of Isaiah 26:3 *“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, who trusts in You.”*

The same applies when the evil one gets the church all stirred up over relatively little issues. I don't mean the big doctrinal issues, but the little issues. Churches have split over the color of carpet, over the type of grills on speaker covers, over the type of tile used in the kitchen. Churches have been divided over the most trivial decisions, and the devil loves it.

But when he comes and tries to stir dissension in the body of Christ we are to dig in with spiritual shoes, and remember Eph 2:14, along with a host of other verses which remind us, *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...”*

You see, in all those ways we refute the evil one by trusting God's promises in Scripture. This is another reason why we need to know our Bibles, and wear the belt of truth that we looked at a couple of weeks ago.

Jesus used the Scripture to refute Satan, and defensively, we, too, are to dig in our cleats, and refute the devil's accusations by trusting the promises of God's Word, - even when the accusations seem so real, even when the storm is an all out hurricane, even when dissension boils over the most trivial thing. At those times we can, and must, stand firm, finding our strength and comfort in the gospel of peace.

Feet That Bring the Gospel

Not only is it necessary to have the right shoes, spiritually speaking, for defense, but also for offense. Incidentally, Romans soldiers were known for their spiked shoes. Not only could they plant their feet firmly in spiked shoes to do hand to hand combat, but Roman soldiers could also cover a variety of treacherous terrain with those spiked shoes, and catch the enemy by surprise.

Both Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great were known for equipping their soldiers with the best footwear for fighting, both defensively, digging in with the sharp cleats, and

offensively, having shoes crafted for comfort and speed that enabled troops to advance into hostile territory more rapidly than the enemy could defend it.

The same concept applies here. Although Satan opposes the gospel, we are to have “*feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel*” meaning we must always be ready to witness to others concerning our Lord, to speak the words that Satan hates: “*Jesus saves! Jesus saves!*”

It is not an option. 1 Peter 3:15: “*In your hearts, set Christ apart as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*”

But the ruse of the deceiver is to ask, “Isn’t that the minister’s job? Or the elders? Or maybe the mission committee’s job? Isn’t that what we have missionaries for? You’re not qualified for that anyway!”

It’s true that not everyone is gifted in the same area, but everyone can have “*beautiful feet*” as Romans 10:15 puts it, - feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel.

To witness that Jesus saves to someone else you need to know, first, man’s need of salvation. Romans 3:10 and the verses that follow put that need very clearly: “*As it is written:*

*“There is no one righteous, not even one;
11 there is no one who understands,
no one who seeks God.
12 All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one....”*

“*...19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*”

Second, to be an effective witness we need to know what God’s provision for our sin is, specifically that He has provided His Son for the salvation of sinners. Romans 3:21-24: 21: “*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*”

Third, to be an effective witness, to bring the gospel of peace to others, we need to know God’s requirement, which is faith in Jesus Christ. In John 6:28-29 the people come to

Jesus with this question: “*What must we do to do the works God requires?*” Perhaps they expected Jesus to give them a long list of Do’s and Don’ts, a list even more exhaustive than that of the Pharisees. But Jesus answered, “*The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent.*”

Ephesians 2:8-9 adds: “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*”

You don’t need to have a Master of Divinity or a comprehensive knowledge of every book of the Bible to be a good witness. We all know the gospel in a nutshell, as Jesus put it in John 3:16, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*”

Pray for Open Doors

A second way to have “beautiful feet,” - feet fitted for the gospel of peace - is to pray for doors of opportunity to open. - Paul speaks of the importance of prayer for the spread of the gospel in Colossians 4:2-6. He writes: “*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*”

Pray for open doors... for wisdom to make the most of every opportunity... conversation seasoned with salt... turn it toward Christ - man’s need, God’s provision, the requirement of faith...

Profession of Faith

Third, profess your faith before others. Romans 10:9: “*If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*”

Matthew 10:32-33: “*Whoever acknowledges Me before men I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown before My Father in heaven.*”

And then you and I must authenticate our words by living a life that speaks louder than our verbal witness, - a life that in the words of 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 is a letter from Christ, known and read by everybody.

There is no news that Satan would rather squelch than the good news of the gospel. Perhaps no words grate his ears more than the words of that hymn: “*Jesus saves! Jesus Saves!*” He hates the gospel that brings peace with God, circumstances and with others.

In the course of your life and mine he will put many barriers up to hinder your witness. But God provides the armor, in the gospel of peace, to fight defensively and offensively. He provides the armor, including even the shoes.

This week, and always, may our feet be ready to stand firm against the devil’s schemes, and also may we be quick to tell others the joyful news: “*Jesus saves! Jesus Saves!*” Amen.