

Rhema Worship Center
Bible Study Ephesians Chapter 6
Verses 15 thru 19

Verse 15

And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

This is perhaps a difficult metaphor to understand. Just what Paul had in mind cannot be understood without some knowledge of the Roman soldier's footwear. The Roman soldier wore a thick-soled sandal with hobnails embedded on the underside for traction. The sandal was laced to the foot and lower leg with leather straps. During the winter months these straps were tied around leather leggings for warmth. Shod like this, the Roman soldier was able to quickly traverse various kinds of terrain. The Roman legions were notorious for their ability to quick-march fifty miles in one day. Surprising their enemy by being where it was thought they could not be, the legions were prepared for battle on any kind of terrain, whether it happened to be the rough and rocky highlands or the hot and dry deserts. When the command came to stand and hold, the legionnaire was able to do so partly because of the traction he could get with his hobnailed sandals. In other words, the Roman sandal was both an offensive and defensive weapon. Likewise, the Christian soldier, having his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, is always ready to give an answer to every man that asks a reason for the hope that is in him (I Peter 3:15). Just as the Roman soldiers were ready for any set of circumstances that came their way, Christian soldiers, likewise, are "anxious for nothing" and know that "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard [their] hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Preparation is a word meaning "a prepared foundation." The gospel provides the footing for everything we do. However powerful the rest of your body is, if you are wounded in your feet you are easy prey for the enemy.

Paul had Isaiah 52:7 in mind when he referred to **having shod your feet**: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*

The idea of **preparation** is really *readiness*. We must be mobile, flexible, and ready with the truth. This is a place to *have* in the Christian life, to live in constant readiness and flexibility. The good news of peace keeps us upright and firm.

Question...how does our peace affect our readiness for spiritual battle?

Question...what do you think “preparation” means in this verse?

Question...how are the armor both offensive and defensive as weapons?

Verse 16

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Paul is alluding to the large shield used by the Roman foot soldier of his day. This shield was not the small round one used by the cavalry; it was, instead, four feet long, two feet wide and resembled a door. It was constructed of wood and wicker over which animal skins were stretched and the edges were studded with iron to protect the leather. The shield, in addition to providing the normal protection one would expect from a shield, was designed specifically to stop and extinguish the flaming projectiles of the enemy. The leather was stretched over the wicker so as to provide a space between it and the wood underneath. When the fiery arrows and darts passed through the leather and stuck to the wood underneath, they were extinguished. It was this very effect to which Paul was referring. In the devil's quiver there are all types of fiery missiles. The apostle mentions tribulation, anguish, persecution, famine, etc. All of these can start the fires of doubt, lust, greed, vanity, envy, etc. But when the Christian soldier takes up his shield (his belief or conviction or trust) he can quench all the fiery darts of satan and his army. The Christian knows that God is able to deliver him from every temptation (II Peter 2:9) and will always be faithful in that He will not allow him to be tempted beyond what he is able to endure and with every temptation will also make a way of escape (I Corinthians 10:13).

The shields had hooks at the top, bottom and sides that allowed them to be locked together. When in the formation of the turtle the soldiers were practically invulnerable. Consequently, when spiritual soldiers of the cross lock their shields of faith together in spiritual combat, they are, as the apostle Paul wrote, “more than conquerors through Him who loved [them]” (Romans 8:37). He went on to say, “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

The Christian soldier who steps out on the battlefield without his shield is committing spiritual suicide. This very foolish and hurtful process is described in I Timothy 6:9-10, which reads: "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Yes, it is unfortunate that there are Christian soldiers who are pierced through with satan's fiery darts. Wounded and dying they cry out that the Lord has not been faithful to them. On the contrary, it is they who have not been faithful to Him. It is they who have failed to take up the shield of faith. The fault is with them, not God.

Question...why do Christians blame God for bad situations in their lives when they don't wear the proper armor?

Question...what are the fiery darts that can be hurled at Christians?

Verse 17

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The Roman soldier's helmet in Paul's time was very different than the skullcap type that is usually depicted by modern artists. The Roman soldier of the First Century and thereafter wore a helmet that flared out on the sides and back to protect the neck area as well as the head. If the soldier got careless or became weary and let his guard down, this helmet protected him from a sword stroke that would have otherwise been fatal. Likewise, the Christian who, either through carelessness or weariness, lets his guard down is still protected from the death blows of the enemy. As Christian soldiers we sometimes make serious mistakes (in other words, in a weakened state of faith, we sin), but isn't it wonderful to know that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9)? Although our shield of faith is the greatest defensive weapon we have in our entire panoply, in that it is able to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy, it is heartening to know that even when we fail to use it as God has designed it, we are still protected. The blow of the enemy still hurts and we may even be knocked to our knees, but the enemy's death stroke does not kill. Praise God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

In many instances the Roman soldiers placed some kind of plumage on the tops of their helmets, and when observed from a distance by the enemy they looked to be

seven feet tall. Consequently, many adversaries were known to have fled just at the approach of the Roman legions. Frankly, with the panoply of God firmly in place, it would not surprise us one bit if our enemy was sometimes tempted to flee at our approach. In I Thessalonians 5:8, Paul refers to this helmet as the “hope of salvation.” Realizing that the helmet of salvation protects us from our own weaknesses and carelessness, we confidently enter the affray knowing that we are going to be victorious with God's help (cf. Romans 8:14-17).

Most of the armies the Romans fought against used curved swords designed primarily for slashing. Consequently, when the enemy soldier lifted his arm to slash with his sword, he left himself vulnerable under his arm where there was no protection from his breastplate. As the enemy soldier swung with all his might, the Roman soldier would block his swing with his shield as he stepped to the left where he would thrust forward with his short sword and ram it into the armpit of his opponent. Without practice the Roman soldier was destined to fail; but with it he conquered every enemy.

Likewise, “the word of God,” which is actually “sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12), requires practice if it is going to be used effectively. Therefore, in his instructions to Timothy, Paul wrote: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15). The skillful use of God's Word “belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14). When used skillfully, the sword of the Spirit pierces the heart (cf. Acts 2:37; 7:54). In order to defeat the enemy, the Christian soldier must learn to use the sword of the Spirit expertly.

It was the sword of the Spirit that the Lord Jesus grasped when He was tempted of Satan in the wilderness. Each time the enemy's subtle taunts, which were designed to cause Him to stumble in His mission, were countered with the proclamation it is written, it is written. It Is Written... and it is the word of God that is the weapon of victory that we must grasp in our hands and our hearts, for with it we can face every accusation of Satan and every doubt that is planted in our minds.

Question...what do you need to have in order to fight with the word?

Question...why is the helmet of salvation such a crucial part of your armor?

Verse 18

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all saints—.

Although some think Paul is still using the military metaphor of the soldier's appeal to his General, we are of the opinion that Paul is now referring to something not available to the carnal soldier. The Christian soldier, unlike the Roman soldier, has at his disposal a means whereby he can continuously communicate (through Christ, of course) with the General (viz. God, the Father). Understanding the seriousness of his warfare, the Christian soldier is always (not just on special occasions) involved in prayer and supplication in harmony with the truths taught in God's Word (i.e., "in the Spirit"). As he fights the good fight of faith, the Christian soldier petitions for the fulfillment of definite needs with the understanding that the One to whom he appeals is not just interested and concerned, but loving too.

Praying for the fulfillment of one's own needs, as well as the needs of "all saints," requires that one must be acquainted with the specific situations that are taking place in the world today. Part of our problem today is that many Christians are uninformed as to what is happening and consequently they are not praying frequently and knowledgeably. Unalert or indifferent to what is happening in the world, their country, their town, their church, and their home, they have a very restricted prayer life. We must remember that if there is any fault it is not with God. We must repent and pray to God for forgiveness and that He keep us from temptation.

Prayer expresses a need that we are unable to satisfy. It is an acknowledgment that we live in total dependence upon the Lord. The essence of all prayer is an admission of utter helplessness combined with absolute confidence in God to supply all our needs according to His great riches in His great glory – and so when we live in an attitude of prayer – when we pray without ceasing, we are simply maintaining the ongoing and constant attitude of simple, child-like trust and helpless dependence upon the Father.

To pray in the Spirit is only possible when we are living in unbroken fellowship with the Father, for a life that is living, walking and praying in spirit and truth is one submitted to His leading and guidance – for the one that lives in helpless submission and dependent upon the Holy Spirit, is the one that truly prays in the spirit. Further we are not to limit our prayers to those things that we consider appropriate, but we are to pray about all things, with every kind of prayer - in the same helpless dependence upon God, knowing that He is not only willing and powerful enough to

answer all our pleadings but are trusting Him, in His wisdom to do only that which is best for us...

And how important to be alert and diligent in prayer. Daniel prayed 21 days continuously and Christ rose early and retired late to spend time with the Father. We are not limited by times or places, but we should ensure that we pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers in helpless dependence on Him - keeping alert and persevering in prayer for all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Question...what should a Christian's prayer practice consist of?

Verse 19

And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.

Paul's request is not selfish! So many prayers are: "Lord, give me!" It is, of course, not wrong to ask for personal things, but our prayers must certainly not stop there. Paul felt the weight of responsibility of preaching the gospel (I Corinthians 9:16). However, it was not just enough to preach the gospel, he wanted to speak it "boldly." Why? Because that which had been a mystery needed to be revealed. The world needed to know that Jesus died, was buried, and arose from the dead so that both Jews and Gentiles might be saved and be ONE in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). The gospel to the Gentiles was not a popular subject, and it took courage to go against the opposition of the Jews. Thus, Paul felt the need of prayers so that he could open his mouth and speak boldly. Today, society is more interested in entertainment, sports, and materialism than the gospel, but this must not keep Christians from spreading the "power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16), for the gospel represents lost humanity's only hope in eternity.

Question...in this day and time, how can we boldly make known the mystery of the gospel?

Question...is the gospel still a mystery after salvation?