



Sermon – June 21, 2020
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Verses Covered This Week

Ephesians 6:15 - 16

Romans 10:13 - 15

Ephesians 2:14, 17

Now as you grab your seats, let's grab our Bibles. We're going back to Ephesians chapter 6 and we're going to spend our time in verses 15 and 16 this morning. And if this is your first time here with us, welcome home. We're glad you made it. Or if it's your first time back now that we've reopened, we are excited you're here on this Father's Day. And I want to say a special word of a happy Father's Day to each one of you. And I know in a room like this, everybody has a different situation with your dad. So maybe some of you are celebrating Father's day for the first time without him to be able to pick up the phone and call. Or maybe for some of you, you never had a dad to call and you wish that you did. In any situation you find yourself this morning, we are going to see a word from our heavenly Father calling us to action in the spiritual battle that we are called to wage against those forces of evil against us. And we're going to see that playing out today in verses 15 and 16 if you want to follow along with me. Here's what Paul says:

¹⁵and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

Now what's the most important thing that happened in the year 1876? Now if you're living here in Aggieland you know that's an easy answer. That's when Texas A&M was founded. But anywhere else in the world, during 1876, they probably would have had a different response. The biggest event, the biggest moment, that took place in 1876 was the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. This was the first time that the world's fair was happening on American soil. It was happening on the 100-year anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. And there was thousands of people from around the world that gathered. And one of the primary things that happened at this centennial exposition is that there was building after building after building of inventors showcasing things that were new to market. And so 1876 at this exposition is where things that had been invented began to become popular. Things like the banana. Got its primary debut in popularity from being introduced in America in 1876. Or Heinz Ketchup or

popcorn or the popularization of Root Beer all took place right there. But the biggest moment that happened in 1876 at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition almost didn't happen. You see there was an inventor who was struggling to make ends meet as he taught school in Boston and he moonlighted with his inventions. And at the last minute, he decided to go and to display his invention at the behest of his fiancé who bought him a train ticket down to Philadelphia without him knowing. And he signed up late and so he was buried on the upper floor in the back corner. A place where almost no one could see what he had to offer. No one knew what this man was bringing to the world. And as the days passed, there was little interest. There were judges that were going around seeking the best inventions that were there. And they didn't give him the time of day. And he knew it was coming to the last day and that his invention had not yet been seen. And so this man by the name of Alexander Graham Bell took matters into his own hands. And rather than reluctantly wait for them to come to him, instead, he was ready and he went to the judges. And it just so happened that one of them happened to be the emperor of Brazil who he had met when the emperor of Brazil had visited Boston just a few years back. And when the emperor saw him, he began to talk to Bell. He began to ask him about his invention and that readiness that Bell displayed was connected through a relationship. And as a result of that, the emperor brought all of the judges and hundreds of other people to Bell's booth to see his invention. Do you remember what it was? The telephone. And so he sat them down there and he took the receiver on one end and a wire stretched dozens of feet to the other end of the setup. And the emperor of Brazil was on the other end and as Bell spoke into that receiver, a word was heard on the other side. For the first time a voice was transmitted in that setting and that changed the world. But think about how it happened. Someone who was ready connected with someone who through relationship so that they might hear a voice that ended up changing the world.

And when Paul speaks here of what it looks like to put on the shoes of the readiness of the gospel of peace, that is the picture that he's giving us. That he is calling us to be ready to make known the voice of Christ. And to connect with others through relationship. And let's remember what's happening here in the book of Ephesians. We've seen the way that Paul started last week taking us through the armor of God. He's talked about the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and now he's going to spend his attention on the shoes and the shield. And what we're going to notice this morning as we turn our attention to the text is that Paul is calling us to always be ready with the gospel and always be resisting the evil one. So look at the way he begins back in verse 15. Notice what it says back there in your text when he says:

¹⁵and, as shoes, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

So let's think about what these shoes are. These shoes were Roman war boots. And they're not typical military boots like you would think of today. They were in a sense more like a strapped on sandal that would come all the way up to the lower shin and they would fasten around the ankles of the soldier in order to hold them secure in the battle. And if you were to look at the soles of them, they were studded with metal in order to protect them from the terrain that they traversed and to ensure that they would not slip in the middle of the battle. And they were well designed for that soldier to be able to travel long distances in order to carry out his mission. And isn't it fitting that Paul gives us that picture here of what it looks like to stake the gospel forward? Because we know from the Scripture that the call to spiritual warfare is not a one-time conflict. It's an ongoing battle. One that we must be properly equipped for so that just like the Roman soldier, we do not slip when we are facing the difficult terrain of life. He speaks there of

having put on these shoes. Now we see that word, put on, in the English and think maybe that's the same word that he's using earlier in this passage about putting on the full armor. But in fact, it's a different picture, it's a different word. It's the kind of word that you would use when, say, you are shodding your feet or you are putting on a shoe or maybe more literally, think about when a horse has a horseshoe put upon it. There is a placing on for the sake of preparation. And it's only used here in the New Testament. There's a sense in which there's a readiness for action that Paul is calling us to. And that's what he speaks of there. Having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. What does Paul have in mind when he speaks of readiness? What is the picture that he's offering us there? He is speaking about the way that he is calling us to preparation for the purpose of proclamation. That we're ready at any moment in order to make Christ known. And I want you to hold your spot here in Ephesians and slide back with me in your Bible to Romans chapter 10. Because I want you to see the kind of language that Paul is picking up on here. It's language that originated in Isaiah 52 in verse 7. If you're taking notes, you want to make a note of that Isaiah 52:7 reference. Paul picks up on that in Romans 10 in this verse we're about to read. And we've seen throughout the study of the full armor of God how reliant Paul was on the book of Isaiah in shaping this understanding of God as a divine warrior. And if you look at the way it speaks of it, Romans chapter 10 in verse 13 says this:

¹³For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?
¹⁵And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

You see that in verse 15? How beautiful are the feet of those that preach the good news? There's this connection in Isaiah 52 here in Romans 10 now today in Ephesians 6 between our feet and our faith. Our shoes and our salvation. There is this message that is coming forth that the messenger is called to take in order to make the gospel known. And Paul was speaking there of a readiness, a preparation. In the same way that a soldier the moment he straps up those sandals is ready for action. Ready for whatever terrain he may encounter. There is a call to readiness in that moment.

I remember when Cami and I were getting ready to have our first son, we were living in Louisville, Kentucky while we were in seminary. And it was in January and she was right at her due date and we needed to go in to the doctor and they said, "Hey, this is just a checkup. We're going to send you home and set an induction date if it's not ready." And being rookie parents, we assumed like everything would be just fine. But we showed up there to the hospital and when they began to check vital signs, they didn't like everything they saw. And so they looked at us and said, "Guess what? You're going to have a baby today." Well we weren't ready for it. We didn't bring our stuff with us there to the hospital. We hadn't mentally prepared for that. There was nothing about us that was ready for the challenge of bringing about a new birth. And it got a little bit more complicated because right as we were heading up there, snow and ice began to fall and what turned into the worst ice storm in several a hundred-year history of Louisville. In fact, it knocked out power all over the city. After we finished our time in the hospital with Nathan, they were saying, "OK, are you ready to go home?" We had nowhere to go because our house had no power. Thankfully there was a local apartment complex that was allowing seminary students who didn't have a place to stay to go there to an unfurnished

apartment. We brought over the air mattress, the pack and play, folding table, and some chairs. And for two nights, we endured that moment. Don't forget that son, it's Father's Day. We were not ready for the experience that we found ourselves in. We were there on the cusp of bringing about a new birth, seeing something new happen, but we were unprepared for the moment in ways that changed after that. So every time we went to the doctor for future births, anytime Cami was close, we always had a "go bag" ready. We always knew this could be the moment. Our mentality shifted to a need for preparation. And that's what Paul was calling us to this morning. That we as Christians would go through our daily life fully prepared to proclaim the truths of God's excellency. To make known the gospel of Jesus Christ. This gospel of peace that he speaks of here. Paul speaks here of peace in ways that should profoundly shape how we understand the passage. Because in the book of Ephesians, the theme of peace comes up over and over again. And if you've got your Bible back in Ephesians 6, just turn back one or two pages to Ephesians chapter 2 in verse 14. I love hearing those pages turn in your Bible. Because when Paul speaks here of peace, we want to make sure we understand what he has in mind. Look at verse 14. Speaking of Jesus, he says this.

¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility

Now look down in verse 17 just a couple verses later.

¹⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

So when Paul speaks about peace here in Ephesians chapter 2, there are two key things He has in mind. The first one is this. That Jesus Himself is our peace. That if you want to understand what peace looks like in your life, it is not some sentimental feeling that you experience when things are going well. It is the victorious Savior who is with you always even to the end of the ages. And it's not just that Jesus is our peace. He is also our model. Because verse 17 tells us that He Himself, Jesus Himself, proclaimed peace to others. He made the gospel of peace known to all people. And you should sense the irony here in Ephesians 6. Because think about what is happening. Paul is calling us to a spiritual warfare in order to bring about peace. Peace only comes through victory in Jesus. And that should remind us of the way that we see peace showing up throughout the Scriptures. Because if we look back in the Old Testament, what we find is that the people of God experienced peace whenever the presence of God is with them in the battle. The presence of God brings about the peace of God. No matter how significant the enemy is. No matter how difficult the trial might be. When God is with us and God is for us, we can have that peace in the midst of battle. That's exactly the type of peace that Paul is speaking of here. And so we should be asking ourselves the question, how do we pursue that peace in our own lives?

And one of the ideas that we have here is that we need to live out a life that is ready to display the gospel of that peace. And so some of the ways that that shows up is that we need to be ready to declare the gospel of peace in our evangelism. In other words, we need to be peace-takers. People who take this gospel of peace to the world around us; to our family, our friends, our co-workers, our neighbors, to those around the globe. And we declare this gospel of peace to them. In fact, in just a couple weeks when we get to verse 19, we're going to talk a lot more about what

it looks like to be peace-takers who declare the gospel in evangelism. But there's more going on here because Paul also is calling us to be ready to deploy the gospel of peace in our discipleship. That the gospel of peace should be at the center of how we live out the Christian faith. How we fight the good fight of the faith. How we resist the schemes of the devil. How we raise others up around us to walk in newness of life. Whether that is through our life groups on Sunday morning or Awanas on Sunday night or in those one on one conversations you have with your child when you're driving down the road. The gospel of peace should be at the center. It should be ready on our lips to declare to help others grow in Christ's likeness and for ourselves to follow Jesus with all our hearts. But then we also see this readiness that it should be displayed in the peace we seek in our relationships. That we should be people of peace. Peacemakers who long to see others thrive. Who take the reconciliation that we have now with God through the blood of Jesus Christ and seek to foster that reconciliation with those around us. That we would be people of peace in this church, Central family. Who seek to unite and bring others together rather than to divide. That we would be peacemakers in our homes. Especially relevant here on Father's Day. Where there may be some of you, and when your family wakes up every day their first question is what kind of day is dad going to have? What's it going to be like? Is it going to be a peaceful day? Is it going to be a stressful day? Is it going to be a miserable day? And you fathers have the opportunity to display the gospel of peace in your homes, to be those peacemakers, to explode the radiance of the gospel in the midst of your family, to be the type here that Paul is calling us to be to always be ready with the gospel of peace.

But I want you to notice a second dimension here of what Paul is showing us this morning from verse 16. If you look back at the text, we're going to see second that we must always resist our enemy by faith. So look at how he says it there in verse 16. He says:

¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

He speaks there in all circumstances. You and I know that a soldier would not need to carry a shield 24 hours a day, would they. When would a soldier carry a shield? Well the only time they'd have any reason to take up their shield is when there's a threat. When there is a danger. So when Paul says here, in all circumstances take up the shield, you know what he's explaining to us? We are always facing a threat. There is always an enemy who is set up against us. And he speaks there of taking up the shield of faith. And in the Roman time period, there were two different types of shields. The first one was small, it was circular, it was designed for mobility. But the second one, the one that Paul is speaking of here, was large. It was about 4-foot-tall, 2 and a half foot wide, in the original language, the word shield is more literally translated as a door. It was something that the soldier would hold up in front of them as they marched against their enemy in order to protect their onslaught. And to take things a step further, during that time period, let's imagine these Roman soldiers were advancing against an enemy city surrounded by walls. What they would do is they would lock arms side by side. They would put up those shields, one next to another. And as they advanced, they would be establishing an impenetrable protection from them, from the arrows that would come from the city walls against them. And so when Paul speaks here of taking up the shield of faith, he's not just talking about us as individual soldiers of Christ. He's speaking about the way that we as a church must come together. We together must take up the shield. We must lock arms to advance in the battle. And Paul tells us why it is that we must take up our shield of faith. Do you see it back there in verse

16? He says that we are to take up the shield of faith with which we can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. So here's what would happen. When you're preparing for the battle, you would take up the shield, that base layer was wood. It was wrapped in canvas and then it was protected beyond that. And before you went into the battle, if there was water nearby, what you would do is you would dip that shield into the water to soak it. And there was a reason for that. Even though it would make your shield heavier, it would provide protection. Because as you advanced against those enemy forces, and they were standing there at the city walls, there would be archers at the top of them. And as you advance into their shooting range, what they would do if they had the resources, they would dip the tip of their arrow in pitch and they would light it on fire and they would take that bow and arrow and they would fling that fiery dart at the approaching enemy. And if they were successful in their strike, it would hit your shield. Guess what happens when a fiery dart strikes a wooden shield? It catches on fire, doesn't it? But if you have drenched it in water before you advance into the battle, what happens? It's able to extinguish the fiery dart of the enemy against you. And what Paul was reminding us here is that if we have been found in Christ, then our lives have been inspired and called to take up a shield of faith that has been drenched with living water that can enable us to stand against the enemy even when he fires these darts against us.

Now our family knows what darts are like these days because it seems like everywhere I look in my home there is nerf weapons and darts everywhere. In fact, one of our sons just had his birthday and that's what he wanted. Was a brand new nerf gun. And this one I'd never seen anything like it. It requires batteries. And it requires batteries because it's got an accelerator in there and it's got so much power in it that it claims it can shoot the dart up to 120 feet. I mean this thing's coming out and if it hits you, it might leave a welt like Nolan Ryan just hit you with a fast ball. That's the kind of danger you're in in that moment. And we see darts all around us. I've always got to have my head on a swivel when I'm in the home. But if a nerf dart strikes you it's just a temporary inconvenience. But if one of these fiery darts reaches you, it's a terrifying experience. Imagine if you are the soldier, this dart hits you, and your only protection now bursts forth in flames. You are faced with a crisis decision. Do you try to find a way to extinguish it on your own or do you give up the shield? And now you are vulnerable to future attacks of the enemy. That is the type of crisis that you will encounter if you do not have the proper shield in the midst of the battle. And what Paul is calling us to this morning is to take up the shield of faith. And that should be a reminder to us of the way that faith has been central to the battles of the people of God throughout the entire Scripture. So in the exodus when God leads His people over dry ground, we see Him delivering them by faith. Or when He brings them into the promised land and they defeat their enemies in the conquest, it is done by faith. And we see this pattern emerge where God fights for His faithful people in their faithful obedience and He fights against His unfaithful people in their sinful rebellion. Faith leads to victory. Unbelief leads to defeat. And that doesn't just happen in the Old Testament. That entire pattern of warfare is coming together and finding its culmination in the cross of Jesus Christ. So think about what happens on the cross. When Jesus comes to live and lives out that perfect life, He goes to the cross to die and He is doing two things at once. As He is strapped to that cross, He is nailed to a tree. He is embodying the sinful rebellion of God's people. In a sense, He is the unfaithful one who takes on the sins of the world. All the fiery darts of the enemy are being thrust forward at Him in that moment and striking their target. And He dies a death that we deserve for facing the judgment that we deserve. But think about also at the same time that's happening on the cross we see something else. That Jesus comes as a sinless one. He

succeeds where Adam fails. He follows through where Israel doesn't. And He goes to the cross as the faithful Son of God who God now fights for in the midst of the battle. And who he gives the victory over satan, sin, and death so that when we look to Christ and salvation, as we take up that shield of faith, we know that He is the one that has taken on the fiery darts for us. And yet we know He is the one that stands victorious and allows us to experience that victory in whatever battles that we face; whatever fiery darts that may come our way. Maybe it's the fiery dart of envy; when you long for the what others have. Maybe it's the fiery dart of cynicism; when you're exhausted by the world around you. Maybe it's the fiery dart of disillusionment; when you just fail to remember why it is you're here and what your life is to be about. Maybe it's the fiery dart of persecution with threats coming to us from the outside of the church. In whatever situation we find ourselves in, the shield of faith is what Paul is calling us to take up in the midst of the battle.

A few decades prior to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, in 1815, right after Napoleon was conquered by other European forces, there was a treaty that took place there in the Congress of Vienna. And some of the agreements in that treaty helped to set the trajectory of modern Europe including one in particular for the nation of Switzerland. That in the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the nation of Switzerland agreed towards a posture of armed neutrality when it came to military battles in the future. That no matter what the warfare that was raging around them might be, no matter who was on what side, they were committed, regardless of the circumstances, to stay neutral in the fight. What Paul is showing us here this morning is there are no Switzerlands in spiritual warfare. That you are either fighting for the kingdom of darkness or you are fighting for the kingdom of light. You are either putting on the shoes of reluctance or you are putting on the shoes of readiness. You are either setting aside the shield of faith or you are taking it up. And the call of the gospel this morning to each one of us is that we would always be ready with the gospel of peace and always be resisting the enemies of God.

Let's close in prayer.

Father, your word reminds us that everyone who's been born of You overcomes the world. And the key to that victory, Lord, is our faith. That faith is the foundation for our victory. And I pray right now, Lord, for the people in this room that they might be ones who would daily take up the shield of faith. That they would resist the schemes of the devil. That they would stand firm knowing that Christ is our shield. And Father, help us to remember that what saves us is not the strength of our grip on the shield, but the strength of the shield in our grip. That Your blood is enough to wash away our sins. And You have called us to always be ready with the gospel of peace to those who are around us. We ask all these things in Jesus name. Amen.