

“Shoes”  
Pastor John Bronson

Ephesians 6:10-20

February 20, 2011

Order of Worship for February 20<sup>th</sup>  
Pre-service Song  
Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment: (?)

Call to Worship: Micah 6:6-8 and Prayer

Songs of Worship:

“Blessed Be Your name”

Overhead

“How Great is Our God”

Overhead

“Joy of My Desire”

Song # 744

“Jesus Saves”

Overhead

“Grace Greater than Our Sin”

Song # 344

Offering and Offertory

Special Music:

Message: “Shoes” (Ephesians 6:10-20)  
by Pastor Bronson

Closing Song: “Like a River Glorious” Song # 737

Parting Word of Grace

Annual Congregational Business Meeting  
4:00 pm in the Sanctuary  
(Evening Studies in the Word)  
Cancelled till next week,  
5:00 – 7:30 pm  
The Music Building

“The Prayer Closet”

February 13, 2011

*“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”*

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying for:

1. **Steve and Carol Lyons, ReachGlobal Missions (EFCA) in Tanzania:** that they will be protected and effective as they teach in a government teachers’ college; that the Lord will lead them to Christian students and those ready for conversion; that their house will be completed and they can move in
2. **President Obama:** that the Spirit will attune his understanding to the Lord’s wisdom and truth; that he will be drawn to love what is good and hate evil; that he will have Christ’s wisdom and courage in dealing with other world leaders
3. **Youth Group and Mexico Mission:** that the Lord will provide many work projects in the community; that the students will have an excellent witness for Christ as they work; that the Butlers will have time, strength and resources to meet the student’s needs
4. **Military Personnel for the Week: Private Cody Henneker** (grandson of Dick and Jane Miller):
5. **College Student of the Week: Cynthia Kinnamont at Berea College, Kentucky** (daughter of Kent and Mami Kinnamont):

We continue today in our study of Ephesians 6:10-20. Two weeks ago we spoke of the belt of truth in reference to spiritual warfare. Last week we spoke of the breastplate of righteousness. Those were the first two pieces of the whole armor of God which Paul spells out in Ephesians 6:1--20. Today we speak of shoes!

*“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.”* (Ephesians 6:13-15)

Reading Ephesians 6:10-20 there is an obvious urgency to Paul’s words. We are engaged in spiritual warfare and it is important that Christians understand that fact. But if we are at war, it is important that when Christians begin to step into that kind of perception of the Christian faith that we understand just what kind of war it is. Paul does not discuss this matter directly, but we might wish that he had. If he had done so we might have been spared some of the misleading ideas which can be so entertaining but are not all that helpful as we equip ourselves for the conflicts which go on day after day. I have in mind such works as these: “This Present Darkness” by Frank Perretti and certain aspects of the “Left Behind” series. Both are certainly exciting as they describe dramatic power encounters between saints and demons. Perhaps I should include such things as “The exorcist”, a film I have not seen but which at least by rumor is at least as dramatic as the novels. These present spiritual warfare as gripping drama, but that is rarely the case in our daily walk. What is God’s call on us? Essentially, God’s call on us is to live righteous lives of effective witness in the world? That is basically what God expects of us. But there is a caveat to this. God wants us to know that when we decide not just to say, “I believe in Jesus”, and then go on living just like you always did but “I believe in Jesus” and then go on to give yourself to Him and to the purpose of God one hundred percent, if we do that, we are going to get us into trouble! And it is this trouble which is spiritual warfare.

I have said that Paul tells us nothing directly about spiritual warfare, but he does tell us a fair amount indirectly in this passage. First he tells us that we are to stand against our enemy’s chief tactic. The enemy is a deceiver. Therefore it is essential for us to be alert to see if we are being misled, misinformed, misdirected in the conduct of our lives. The second thing he tells us is that it is not men who are our enemies, we are not actually out to defeat some foreign body – we might at this point think of the Islamic Jihadist, but they are not our enemy. Our enemies, beloved, are spiritual powers. These are the enemies that we are fighting. This should be enough to persuade us that the real battles are fought in and for hearts and minds. That is where the battles are. Next he tells us that our task or objective in this war – and when you read this passage Paul is emphatic - is to stand firm. If you follow what Paul has to say here you realize that the first order of business is that when I am engaged in life I am not moved off of the ground that I stand on in Christ: so I need to know what that ground is.

We might conclude this becomes a war of defense, not offense. In terms of spiritual warfare, that is right. In terms of the spiritual dynamic, yes, it is primarily a war of defense. I am going to hold my own. I am not going let something come in and alter my perception, to rewrite the rules or change the truth that has been given, as Jude says, handed down once for all to the saints. I will stand fast. But we would be in error if we concluded that the spiritual warfare we are engaged in altogether, the spiritual lives that we are to lead, are ones of passivity let alone indifference regarding the world around us.

The first think I want to address in our minds is, what is supposed to be our attitude toward the world around us? Ought we, in other words, to be defensive? Well, there is a sense in which we should be, but let me share with you some of the words of Jesus that describe the essence of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged. We are those who are made ready by the gospel of peace. Those are the shoes that we put on. So when we rise up in the morning, when we step out into wherever we are going to engage [others] – you might think it is when you open the door to go outside, but I would contend that most of us begin to engage when we get out of bed. We should remind ourselves from the outset that we are those who are shod with the preparation of peace, and that should have a lot

to do with what comes out of our mouth as well as the impulses of our hearts. What does it mean to be men and women of peace? This is what Jesus said: (Mtt.5:3-16 & 38-44, 48 & 28:18-20)

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (I am a man of peace!)*

*You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (I am a man of peace!)*

*You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, ‘Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.’*

*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust... You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

To wrap this up and get the full picture that Jesus lays in front of us, we come to the very close of the gospel when all was said and done, and Jesus says this:

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. God therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Ah, I am a man of peace. My enemy is not my neighbor; it is the deceiver.)*

Christians are not called to be passive in the midst of the world; they instead are called to be faith-filled followers of Jesus. And they are called in that faith to be ready to endure whatever degree of difficulty in order to remain true to the teaching and the Spirit of Jesus. This is standing fast; this is holding our ground. The reason is that we might always leave room for the grace of God to work by means of the Word of God. What is that grace? The grace of God is a forgiving love. Who of us doesn’t know that? A forgiving love. That is what grace is about! It is the willingness to work with difficult people. Are any of you acquainted with difficult people? How many of you are acquainted with the bathroom mirror? Our constant endeavor is to expose people to God’s love, that is the objective. But if this is going to happen, there is something very essential [that needs to be true]. If we desire to leave room for the grace of God to work, we must be at peace, not at war. Our desire is not to crush and destroy those around us; our desire is to bless and see them saved. These are the marching orders for those who would become the warriors of God. Perhaps the most helpful verse that we can have in our minds as we equip ourselves in the morning to go out and to carry the cause is 2Cor.5:16, not one I think that AWANA wants us to memorize, but maybe they should, for this is what it says: *“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.*

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*Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.*” Instead, if you read the rest of that passage, we recognize that we are called to be the ambassadors of Jesus Christ to engage in a ministry of reconciliation, reconciling people first with God and then amongst one another. Why? I am a man of peace, I am shod with the equipment of the gospel of peace: that is the nature of the warfare in which I am engaged.

As we engaged in this attempt to expose others to the love of God and the gospel of God, we are not expected by God to be constantly preaching at everybody. Here is wise counsel for God’s warriors, two verses out of Ephesians: Eph.4:29 gives this cautionary word to the warriors: *“let no corrupting [another translation has “unwholesome” which I rather prefer] word come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”* Grace: give grace to those who hear: this is why I think we need to be sure we have shod our feet with the gospel of peace before we get out of bed to be certain that what comes out of our mouths is wholesome, that it is purposefully designed to give grace to those I meet, at the kitchen table, perhaps, or in the bathroom when deciding who is first and who is third. (I grew up in a household of four children. My sister is here today! For a long time we had one bathroom that was smaller than some people’s closets. Of course today some closets are larger than what used to be some people’s houses, so it is hard to identify with that very much!) So there is your first thought about this. You might want to say, do I tie a reminded of peacemaking around my tongue. That is the first counsel for being peacemakers. The second is Eph.5:8-10, *“...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”* We learn what is “good and right and true” and what is wholesome and what gives grace in our study of God’s Word. We are to take that knowledge with us into all the activities of life and all the relationships we form. You might consider that when you engage in personal devotions you might consider that rather than saying “Lord, bless me and help me to have a good day,” you might want to say, “Lord show me how I can bless someone else today with the love of God, equip me to bless someone else with the love of God.” That might be a way to shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Our warfare is not with our neighbors; it is not even primarily with our culture. Our warfare is primarily with ourselves. This is where it begins, and if you lose the battle within yourself at the start of the day, you are useless as God’s warrior for the rest of it. So we need to attend to first matters first. A great passage to think about this. Read it from this perspective. A second passage is 2 Corinthians 10:3-5: *“for though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...”* It may well be true, beloved, and at sometime will certainly be the case, that as Christians we need to take on the powers and principalities in the world around us. Who of us does not know that the media in our country pour out a constant stream not just of pornography – we are the largest producer of pornography in the world. But cross over to the “legitimate media”. There is a constant stream of misleading statements, false information, prejudiced accounts and so on, and that most of the media has a strong social, political and moral agenda which leaves no room for the practice of a biblically defined Christian faith. We know this. I also know that if I was Christian right now living in Egypt I would be terrified. If I was a Christian living in Iraq – and there are Christians living in Iraq – I would be terrified. The warfare in which we are engaged can become bloody. We know that. But that does not alter the fundamental fact that we are to shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Long before we tackle those opposing forces we need to put our own house in order, the house of our heart, mind and spirit. We cannot lead others to places we have never been or expect them to embrace truths and practices with which we are scarcely familiar. To put it bluntly: undisciplined Christians do not make good witnesses.

What does it mean to have as shoes the “readiness given by the gospel of peace”? Understanding readiness, or preparedness, will be helped by knowing what sort of footwear the Roman soldier wore, for that is what this whole

metaphor or armor is built on: what the Roman soldier actually wore. The Roman soldier wore a sandal made of very heavy leather which had embedded in its sole what are called hobnails, rather like the cleats you find on certain kinds of running shoes today. The hobnails gave the soldier great stability by gripping into the ground. The heavy leather was needed not only to hold the hobnails, but also to protect the feet from hazards, especially the danger of sharply pointed spikes which at times were buried point up in fields, along paths and roads and the like over which soldiers were likely to run. Thin soled sandals or bare feet would come to swift ruin. So the readiness or the preparedness of the soldier's feet permitted two essential actions: standing fast, and moving forward, both included under the idea of surefootedness. The point of the Roman military sandal was surefootedness, holding your position or moving forward without slipping or falling. What about us in our Christian lives?

Our enemy is tricky. An alternate translation for “schemes” is “wiles”. The deceiver will use any means available to derail us, to put us off guard and then throw us off balance and finally throw us to the ground into the muck of self-defeating condemnation, effectively wiping us out. To hold him off we need to be very sure footed in the gospel of peace with God. We touched on this last week in considering the effective protection we gain from the breastplate of righteousness. We are assured of our salvation. Each piece of armor of course blends with the others, for all deal with the truth of our salvation by grace through faith. Today, however, we are thinking specifically of what it means to be shod with the gospel of peace [the peace that is ours with God through faith in Jesus]. Here is a great verse to memorize: John 14:27. *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”* This is a piece of advice, a piece of truth, a relationship or a description of the relationship that I have with my God that I need to recall frequently: I am at peace with my God. At the core, the center of who I am, it is well with me and my Creator, my redeemer, my God; it is well with me no matter what my external circumstance. No matter who my enemy: it is well with me. Jesus says the same again in John 16:33, *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”* In John 16:33 Jesus' words speak both to our experience and to our temptation. What is the temptation? We don't want trouble. We may want adventure. Adventures are great! One of my great aspirations is to have all of my family all gather on the north rim of the Grand Canyon and then some of us will hike to the bottom and back up again, and some won't! That is an adventure. Someone said once, maybe you ought to ride the donkey's down: you can rent donkeys. That is insane! Those donkeys think they are sure footed! The trot along and go to the edge of the cliff, and that is terrifying. And a thousand foot fall would be tribulation. I don't want tribulation. I don't want to be maimed or crushed, I don't want wounds and brokenness, I don't want pain and trouble. That becomes a temptation. The deceiver: here is standard deception number one: we cannot win, therefore make peace with the world. Faithfulness is simply impossible; you can't pull it off. You will fail. Therefore start from the beginning with compromise. It will ease the journey. You need to understand that God is an understanding God. He knows all about your troubles and it really won't bother Him all that much if you make 'timely accommodations' to fit in with the larger scheme so that there is no trouble. Curiously this always involves turning away from faithful obedience to God. We want peace, but we find it hard to trust God. It is easier to trust God for eternity than it is for tomorrow's job interview. It is easier to trust God for eternity than it is for working to day with “so and so”. How many of us know a “so and so”? Ah, I can't imagine going to work all day with so and so: Peace on my feet, peace in my heart, peace on my tongue. It is easier to trust God for eternity than it is for socializing with my friends: I wouldn't dream of letting them know what I believe in; they would all laugh at me. I can't stand it if they laugh at me. It is easier to trust God for eternity than it is to trust God for healing a broken relationship or a dying marriage.

Standard deception number two: You must understand that the devil himself will tell us, “Hey look, relax. All is well. Just step back, take a little time for yourself, concentrate on number one for a while. The deceiver wants to lull us to sleep. The challenge is both to be at peace and yet to stand firm, to be ready, fully prepared with your belt on, the breastplate in place, and your feet ready with hobnailed sandals. But in days of peace we are so tempted to be at ease, to drop our guard, to take off our sandals and put on slippers, to dream and to play. We are not dressed.

Paul wrote this at the very end of the letter to the Corinthians (1Cor.16:13) *“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all things be done in love.”*

Children are allowed to play; as adults we are expected to remember both who we are and what we need to do. Paul said (13:11), *“When I was a child...I acted like a child...when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”* Christians are not called to be passive in the midst of the world; they are called to be faith-filled followers of Jesus who endure whatever degree of difficulty in order to remain true to the teaching and the Spirit of Jesus. In everything we do, we are to consciously make or leave room for the grace of God to work by means of the Word of God. We need to ask, am I really at peace with God? Have I brought the thoughts of my mind and the desires of my heart into submission to God’s truth and His plan for my life? Are there still strongholds of resistance in me? Do I know the terms and conditions of peace with God so well that in conflict with the temptations of the world, or in conversation or even confrontation with those around me I remain surefooted, able to hold my own and even to advance the cause of Christ so that some at least will hear the good news of God’s love and be drawn to the Savior?

Let us pray. Our heavenly Father you have told us through your servant Paul that we are engaged in spiritual warfare. It is relentless day in and day out, and it approaches us from every front. You have said we need to be fully equipped to fight. And you have said that we are warriors of peace, and we engage the world with Your love, Your truth and Your grace. Equip us indeed. We bend before you and receive the benediction: peace from our God. We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. Is spiritual warfare something that comes often to mind for you? If so, what are your thoughts about it?
  
2. If Satan is already a defeated enemy, what is the purpose of objective in the spiritual war?
  
3. What is the greatest challenge you face in being an effective spiritual warrior?
  
4. In your estimation, what is the most effective enemy of the Christian faith in America today? What steps might Christians and churches take to combat this enemy?
  
5. Was it helpful to learn the kind of sandals the Romans soldiers wore for understanding the importance of having the “readiness given by the gospel of peace”?
  
6. In your experience what are some of the most effective deception used by the enemy?
  
7. Would you agree that being effective in spiritual warfare is largely a maturity issue; see ICorinthians13:11 and 16:13?
  
8. Why is being at peace with God so critical in spiritual warfare?
  
9. Do you know the “conditions” of peace with God so well that you can reassure yourself and also let others around you know them?