LSB Ephesians 6:10 - 17 P.t. 5

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 authorities, 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, having taken up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, 17 also receive the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

We've been slowly working our way through these different pieces of the whole armor of God having made it through verse 14. Those segments are available at our web pages if you need them.

Paul, in his complete treatment of the christian experience from the mechanics of before and after salvation, the understanding of how we moved from death and condemnation to life and acceptance and future wealth, in Christ is detailed for us in chapters 1 - 3.

Then Paul in chapters 4,5, and 6a tells us how christians live, different and set apart from the lost condemned world around us. This is who you are; 1 - 3. This is how you live; 4 - 6a. But finally, Paul addresses the inevitable war zone.

And modern christians, or some who think they are but are not, may say to themselves; Wait a minute here. When did I sign up for battle duty. My recruiter just said this was all a green field of posey's. I signed up for fire insurance and a better life now. That's what the guy told me. Nobody said anything about a war zone. I didn't sign up for battle.

Here's the reality check. If in fact you are a christian, Christ purchased you out of this condemned world into future riches and wealth we can't really even imagine yet. But, he left you in Satan's world. For now.

The reality is, if you're a christian, you're an enemy combatant in a war zone. Satan is furious because you got away, and the whole world that he rules is designed to be at war with God, and since you now belong to God, guess what? You're in harms way.

But, good news. Our side wins. At the end. But meanwhile, like the dentist says, you may experience some discomfort. Don't you love those guys. He's about to saw off your arm with a sawzall and he tells you, you may experience some discomfort. If you're a real christian in Satan's cosmos, you may experience some discomfort.

What Paul does in this passage is tell you how to prepare for the war zone you're actually in. Paul wants you to be standing when the heat of the day of battle passes by. If you've got your armor on, the war moves through where you're at and you'll have dead people laying all around you, but you'll be standing.

Why did God do that? Why rescue me and leave me in the war zone with land mines all over the place. Why not just snatch me out of here?

The answer is in the question. How did it happen that you were rescued? Well, you say, someone told me I was condemned because I had offended a Holy God, but that God had provided a way out of my due punishment for my rebellion and sin.

Someone told me about Jesus. How He left His home with His Father in glory and came to earth, and died in my place, on a cross, taking the punishment I was due, on Himself, for me. They told me that He rose up again from the dead.

I believed and that same person prayed with me to receive Christ as my own saviour. Jesus came into my heart and my life changed. I was at war with God, and now, I'm at peace. I have peace and because of that ultimate peace with God, I have a deep seated joy. I'll take whatever war this world can throw at me and it's no comparison to the peace inside me. Bring it world.

Exactly. That person that told you can't tell everybody. We are tasked to be telling others what some dear christian told us. That's the sole reason God saves us and leaves us here in the battle zone. Someone in harms way rescued you, and now, while Jesus tarries, you need to rescue others like you were.

I listened to a fun podcast the other day. My kids turned me onto it. Willie Robertson. The duck commander guy. Remember that show. Duck dynasty. He did a couple of hour interview with Tucker Carlson. And in that interview, he describes himself as a gos**pel**er.

Yes, that's a word. It's not a mangulation of the word gospel, it's an obsolete word once used but now mostly forgotten that means someone who passionately shares the gospel.

He's written a book and I absolutely love the title. Gospeler: Turning Darkness into Light One Conversation at a Time. Somebody needs to get me a copy for Christmas.

Think now about where we're at in Paul's list of armor. What's next. There's sort of a logic to Paul's sequence. We've got our foundation piece protecting our loins; truth. Then we've got a breastplate protecting our vital organs. Righteousness. Can't have righteousness without truth. Truth is where everything begins. Add righteousness based in the truth. Then we've got our next piece in the logical order of a christian war.

We need to get proper functional footwear that is effective for taking the gospel of peace back into the world we left behind. There's no gospel

without the truth. And the gospel is powerless and meaningless without personal righteousness.

But with those two pieces in place, it's time to select footwear that will be effective to the task of gos**pel**ing.

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

None of the armor has any meaning without this piece. This is the purpose of the armor. The battle we're readying ourselves for revolves around taking the gospel of peace back into the front lines of Satan's rebellion.

The war we're in revolves around the gospel of peace. Satan is holding captives in captivity because of sin. Sin causes spiritual death. Because of sin you're dead to God but alive to Satan. Sin puts you at war with God. Friends with this world are enemies with God. Individual sinners are at war with God.

The gospel of peace reverses all of that. The sin that killed you spiritually, that made you an enemy with God is forgiven and removed. That in turn quickens you spiritually to life together with God. You are no longer at war with God, peace inside your heart and sweet fellowship with God result.

That's why Paul calls it the gospel of peace. The good news that brings peace. Inner peace with God. Your debt is removed as far as the east is from the west. Peace which passes all understanding is yours. And once you have it, it's the most valuable comodity you own. You'd give your life to keep that peace. Christians in other lands are paying that price now.

So, the gospel that brings peace in Satan's war, one freed captive at a time, is the whole purpose of the armor. It's the whole point. If we aren't planning to go into the war zone and bring peace though the gospel of Jesus to captives of Satan, we don't need the rest of the armor.

The gospel is the cause and effect of the war. And Paul assumes, rightly, that as christians who love Jesus, we will be like all the 15 year olds who lied about their age in world war 2 because they wanted to get in the battle. The excitement for the cause is right in the middle of the fray. Christians who dodge Jesus' draft into this battle are ..... a conundrum at best. Maybe they aren't really christians at all, at worst.

The gospel of peace is the whole point of the rest of the armor. Remove it and the whole rest of Paul's argument is pointless. We're taking peace into a war zone. We're like the underground railroad that helped escaped slaves get to free states out of harms way. Like the christians in Denmark who hid jews in false walls to protect their lives from the Nazi's who would kill them if they were found. Those christians put their life on the line to save the lives of others and get them to safety.

We take the gospel of peace to release Satan's captives, one believer at a time, and we do it in the face of personal spiritual harm. Thus we need this armor that Paul defines for us.

And Paul says if you're going to get in the war, you're going to need the right footwear for battle.

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.
That word tranlated preparation, is key to understanding this. We're readying for a battle. We know the battle is there. We can calculate ahead of time what we will need for this battle. We know the gospel of peace is the problem that the world is at war against. What do I put on my feet so that I can get this gospel safely to the target. What is the proper choice of footwear for this war task?

If you were cleaning out my house after I died you would find four or maybe even five or six different types of footwear that I currently have about the place. Different styles and configurations for different jobs they need to be able to perform.

I have beat up sneakers that I wear most of the time. Good for most of what I find myself doing. I chop firewood in them. Fix cars in them. Go to the grocery store in them. I'd guess they suffice for maybe 95% of the ordinary tasks I perform.

If I go into the mountains to harvest fire wood with my chain saws, I have some logging boots that I bought 35 years ago from a Northern California professional arborist supply place where serious woodsmen go.

Then in my closet in sadly almost new condition I have a pair of steel toed work boots that Sandia Labs bought for me. I did wear a few out but when I left, the ones I had were little used. If the safety guy wasn't looking I'd be out in the snow climbing up on stuff with sneakers on.

Then I have like 3 tiers of dress shoes. These I have on this morning are the latest and also the most casual. Slip on Sketchers. I have black slip on's that are dressier. And I have some brown lace ups that are even a bit more formal. If someone's going to put me in a texedo, the matching shoes will be rented at the same place.

Oh, and out in the garage, I have a pair of serious snow / mud boots. Waterproof and well insulated against the cold. They're size 11 if anyone wants them. I think I'm done with real snow and serious mud.

So if you stretch reality a bit I think I described 7 different types of footwear useful for 7 different possible applications. Oh, and sandals I keep in the trailer for summer campouts. That's 8.

Those sandals are probably the closest to ordinary footwear in the ancient near east. But Rome learned the hard way; wars are won or lost because of improper foot wear. A soldier needs something tough enough and thick enough to protect his feet. And they probably had some kind of spikes for traction. Hobnails. Soldiers move from battle to battle, so footwear is their most important piece. Get to the next battle, then get in the fight.

Paul says, you're going to need appropriate footwear for gospeling.

It's no accident that Paul chose the feet for this article of armor. Wars require moving the battle to the recipient. And in the ancient world, logistics to the battle front happened with feet. We don't wait at home for the battle to come to us, we go to the battle.

In Isaiah 52, leading up to the famous Isaiah 53 passage that describes the substitutionary death of Jesus, in our place, is this beloved and well known verse about feet. It is messianic. It's about the Messiah whose feet brought about the possibility of peace through forgiveness of sin.

How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who proclaims good news, Who announces peace And proclaims good news of good things, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" Isaiah 52:7

We christians are the bearers of that good news in this fallen world. That's how we got our name. Christian. Little christs. The very mantle of bringing good news of peace to a fallen and condemned world is passed down, by Jesus, to us.

He lives in our hearts. He continues to bring good news of peace with God, through the agency of our mouths and our feet, to the captives, one person at a time. Our feet are lovely on the mountains, when they bring the good news of release from captivity into peace with God.

In Romans chapter 10, Paul ascribes these feet which Isaiah meant concerning the Messiah, to all who, in His place, take the message of peace out into the lost world. Ro. 10:

13 for "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 15 And how will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news of

good things!"

Is there an echo in the room? Paul just preached my sermon for me. This is exactly the whole point of the armor of God. You gird on your truth. You put on your breastplate of personal righteousness. And you put on the shoes which are the whole purpose of going to take the gospel out into the war zone.

If we aren't doing that; the whole argument is moot. Take the shoes out of the armor and the rest collapses. If I'm not using my feet to go into battle, I don't need a loin belt, I don't need to know the truth, I don't need a shield or a helmet if I'm not going where the missiles are flying. And I don't need a sword to lounge around the TV set.

15 and having shod your feet with the <u>preparation</u> of the gospel of peace.

What is involved with the idea of getting ready for the battle? What is the *preparation of the gospel of peace*?

1 Peter 3:15 is for every single christian. Peter tells the church;

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

That's the preparation of the gospel of peace. Being ready to give every man an answer.

If someone walks up to you and says, you go to that Bible pounder church, don't you. What's that about? Are you a christian? What's different about christians? Sounds like most of them are just like me. Are they hypocrites?

Do you know enough about your own salvation to give answers based in biblical truth? Basic mechanics of true salvation that actually is regeneration from death in sin to life in Christ?

You don't have to go to seminary to answer basic questions. But some preparation is required. The preparation of the gospel of peace is an understanding of the basic mechanics of salvation that you know what happened and why. And how it can happen for the person you're talking with.

All have sinned. Sin kills you as far as a personal relationship with God. The whole world is under blanket condemnation. If you remain in your sin you are at war with God. 1 Jn. 5:19 *We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*.

That idea will cause a reaction. Usually a defensive one. I'm not at war with God. I love the idea of a God who (who I've created in my own mind) a God who loves me no matter what sin I'm engaged in. A God like Jesus who dines with sinners and doesn't require them to stop. A grandfatherly god who just unconditionally loves me in my continuing sin. They deny their ot odds with God.

Last evening I watched another Tucker interview. He's in Moscow, speaking with the main diplomatic top person in Russia, just below president Putin. And here's what's happening. For political fall out reasons our lame duck president is firing long range missiles into the heartland of Russia and killing russian people inside their own borders. We're doing that.

So if someone from Russia calls you up and says, you are at war with us. You're first reaction is, I'm not at war with Russia. That's the last thing I want is to be in a war with Russia who has dirty nukes on the shelves ready to fire at me.

But, in fact, you are a citizen of a nation who has soldiers with your nations uniform on, who are on the ground, firing long range missiles into the sovereign nation of Russia. You may not think you're personally at war, but you're part of a citizenship of a nation that is doing acts of war.

Sweet sinners, who live up and down the block I live on, who wouldn't swat a fly, are in fact at war with God. There's no middle ground. You're either a citizen of heaven because your sins have been removed, and therefore you're at war with Satan, **or** you're a member of the citizenship of this world, an ordinary everyday sinner, and therefore, you are at war with God. You are His enemy. And when you die, grace is over.

That idea I just laid out very simply is the basis for the gospel of _____? What class? Peace. All these dear sweet people need to be brought to an understanding that they're at war with a gracious God, who doesn't want to bring judgement that is due them, but grace has an expiration date.

You listen to that diplomat speak in that interview and you get the sense that Russia, they understand American politics a little bit, and they get that the lame duck president is throwing hand grenades at them, not so much to harm them as to harm the president elect. They're actually more patient folk than we give them credit for. They're waiting to see what the new president will do with the dangerous escalation by the lame duck sitting president who has very very evil intents.

God is gracious with sinners. In this life. But grace has an expiration date. When you die, you face your enemy that you were lobbing grenades at, and you find out, oopsie, my little grenades weren't a grain of sand on the sea shore compared to the powers of punishment a furious God has at His disposal. And on that day, it's too late.

Mr. Trump likes to boast about being a deal maker. God has a deal that he offers to sinners. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus says something about making peace before the judgement court. Make peace with your opponent **before** you come before the judge.

25 *Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison*. Matt. 5:25

We have the good news that can cause that transaction to happen. In time. We have the gospel of peace. Jesus died to satisfy the judgement for our sins. He took our punishment in our place. It's transactional. He took my sins. It's like I handed off a ticking time bomb to Jesus and He in turn gave me His rightousness, and with that righteousness, peace with God.

I stand before the judge and he opens His book to find the judgements against me for all my sins but instead He finds the word; Righteous. Perfect. Sinless. Jesus took my sins away and gave me His righteousness. That's the transaction of salvation. I was in a state of war. Jesus gave me peace. Transactually. I gladly took the deal on the way to court.

It isn't rocket science folks. But you do need to know enough basics so that when someone asks you about the hope of peace you claim, and that hopefully is evidentiary in how you live your life, you can give them a gospel answer.

Good news! You're at war with God but He has an offer of peace. Jesus purchased peace for you. It's available. It's possible.

Part of this idea of preparation, getting the gospel ready and settled enough in your own mind that you're ready to take it into the world to others is the confidence you have in Christ's completed work for you when you understand it well.

Most christians you talk to cannot tell you how they were saved or what they were saved from. I'm trying to think of a better word, but I'm a gear head and all I can come up with is the mechanics of salvation. The intricacies of what had to happen to quicken a dead person separated from God to life in Christ, alive, together with God.

Gospelers don't have to be able to explain the differences of supralapsarianism, infralapsarianism, sublapsarianism, and pelagianism in order to tell someone how it is that Jesus can turn the war with God into

peace with God.

God made it simple enough that the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err. God designed salvation for low IQ folk like me to be able to understand what happened, and tell someone else.

But when you do understand what happened, your confidence just grows by leaps and bounds.

I grew up around christians across the street who were of the pentecostal persuasion and they believed salvation could be lost. Lose it, get it back, lose it again, get it back again. They're worse than me and my key ring.

And they would tell me, ohhh, be careful, tread lightly, I think you're getting to close to the unpardonable sin. Be careful. It was because I went to one of their bible studies and they were all doing the gibberish thing together at the same time and I told them they were lunatics. Ohh, tread lightly.

Then I went home and Paul says, in 1 Cor. 14 if someone walks in to your place and you're all doing the gibberish thing, they'll think you're lunatics. And I thought, I'm in pretty good company. My reaction was exactly what Paul warned against.

54 years later my salvation is still robust and I don't think any of that clan still goes to church. That's because I learned my salvation had nothing to do with me in the first place. I didn't begin it and I can't end it. The salvation I have is indestructable.

Again, Paul says; Romans 8
35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or turmoil, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "For Your sake we are being put to death all day long;
We were counted as sheep for the slaughter."
37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who

loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But then my other neighbors would say, oh, but it doesn't say you can't undo it yourself. Nonsense.

The preparation of the gospel of peace is driven by confidence in an indestructible gospel.

Then along with the mechanics of how the gospel works, how the transaction happens, through faith alone, we learn that we don't have any power to effect any change in others. Gos**pel**ers are just seed throwers. We don't make the soil. We don't cause the life in the seed. Our job is finished when we've delivered the good news. We have no control over results, life, or rejection.

The power is in the gospel. Paul says I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation.

That's important to understand. My confidence gets even greater. My sole job is to give the complete simple gospel. Then I'm outa there. Well, not quite that quick and dirty. Paul says we persuade men. We can clarify and use apologetics to try to break down wrong arguments. We can love on them time and time again. We can plant the seed and water and water and water some more . . . . and hope. We can even pray. But only God can quicken dead hearts to life.

The preparation of the gospel of peace is all the things we CAN do. Then we go home and go to sleep. I can't make the seed grow.

Mark 4:26 *Jesus also said, "The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day he sleeps and wakes, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he knows not how. 28 All by itself the earth*

produces a crop—first the stalk, then the head, then grain that ripens within. 29 And as soon as the grain is ripe, he swings the sickle, because the harvest has come.

My job in all of this is to bring the good news with as much clarity as I possibly can. That requires me to do some preparation work first. I need to understand the mechanics of salvation. How, exactly, did God design it, that a dead in sin person can be quickened to spiritual life. What is involved in that process.

We want to understand the problem and the remedy. The problem is sin. The remedy is someone taking the punishment due you for your sin, and in sin's place, transactionally, they give you their righteousness.

Jesus is the single person qualified to make that transaction. He is the single person who never sinned. He is the sole person who has a perfect righteousness to offer up to God. He never sinned. He is the one person who can take your sin upon Him, and endure the full punishment you were due, and in it's place, give you His righteousness.

It's transactional. You hand Him your sins, past present and future, and He hands you His perfect righteousness. The Bible often uses the metaphor of garments. You give Jesus your filthy sewage soaked vile garments and He gives you His robes to wear, spotless, white and clean.

He took the sins of the world to the cross and bore our punishment. He died the death of separation from His Father. Then He rose on the third day from the dead. He ascended to the Father and He will call all of us who have believed to be with Him together with the Father. We think that day may be soon. We look nervously at the danger of nukes flying around this world and we think perhaps it may be very soon.

Well, it looks like we'll enjoy another week or two together speaking about these things. But before we call it quits for our thinking this morning I want to expand on the idea of the good news.

We stated the problem. Sin. Sin caused a separation between us and God. And Satan has a cure. Sin is the problem? We can fix it. We can counteract wickedness with self righteousness. We can fix this. Ourselves.

We used to ask people 2 questions. (1) If you died today do you think you would go to heaven. Question 2 If you did die and appeared before God and He said, Why should I let you into my heaven, what would you say?

And that second question is where you get a thousand different answers that revolve around some false religions self made plan of self induced righteousness.

All Satanic religion has the same plan. You can work your way to heaven by doing good works. Sin is the problem, Satan's got a solution for you. He's got a plan on how you can be good enough to get back into God's good graces.

Self torture. Self massichism. Self denial. Self improvement. All of his plans fall short. Jesus said, *Therefore, you must be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect*. Mt. 5:48 That's God's standard. We are bankrupt.

God's plan is He does it all. He pays the full penalty for the sin. He supplies you with His own perfect righteousness. Salvation is ALL of Him and none of you.

Let's do some self inventory this week. What can you do to have confidence that you are prepared to take the gospel cure out into the trenches.

A final thought. Yes, we do need to prepare the gospel. Yes we do need to move our feet into the battle arena. But He comes along side and helps.

Listening to my favorite preacher earlier this week, and he was talking about different times TV people have invited him to come onto their

discussion panels or question panels etc. And he says, *I never prepare for those deals ahead of time*. He says *I have no idea what they're going to ask or where the discussion is going to go*. But he says, *I'm always amazed to hear what comes out of my mouth*.

Matthew 10, Jesus tells His followers; *18 and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given to you in that hour what you are to say. 20 For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you*. Matt. 10:18 - 20

That does not negate your responsibility to prepare the gospel. Get it ready. Understand it inside and out. That's the preparation of the gospel of peace. Then get ready to be amazed at how God uses your feet, and your voice.