

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 23:10:2007

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

THE WELL DRESSED CHRISTIAN

5. ALL GOD'S CHILDREN NEED SHOES

Martin Luther stood before the adversaries of his day and declared, “**Here I stand, I can do no other.**” His stand for the great reformation truths is not only well documented, but also very much appreciated. What may not be so much appreciated is that his stand for God was accompanied by some very intensive times of conflict with Satan. Indeed there was a time in his life when his conflict with Satan became so real that it took on a physical manifestation for him. *In anger over Satan, Martin Luther picked up his inkwell and threw it at him. It broke, and splattered ink all over his wall.* The stain remained for many years, reminding many people of how intense and vivid the conflict had been in his life. Now in these studies we are being reminded that the Christian and Satan are in mortal combat. Paul reminds us in (Eph 6:12) that “ *we wrestle,*” and that verb describes a life and death, hand to hand combat.

My the enemy is still the same as in Martin Luther's day. Satan assaults the work that God is attempting to accomplish in the lives of His children. There is war going on, a ceasefire has never been declared. This is why Paul

closes the Ephesian letter by describing the armour of the Christian. As Paul examines the Christians war with Satan, he pictures a Roman soldier ready for battle. That soldier's preparation provides Paul with the imagery he uses to illustrate the Christian's battle with Satan. “ *All God's Children got shoes.*” So declares the Negro spiritual. But what kind of shoes ? Dr. Ted Rendall reminds us that “ *some Christians walk about in hob nailed boots, they make their presence felt all right, but it is in a most uncomfortable distressing way. When they step on toes, there are problems. Some Christians were bed room slippers. They gave every evidence of ease and sloth and general relaxation. They may be soldiers, but they are bed room soldiers, not battlefield soldiers. Some Christians must have on shoes with paper thin soles. They drop out of the march whenever the way gets tough.*”

You see, in any war footwear is terribly important. Do you recall the story of Achilles ? Achilles was the greatest, bravest, strongest and most handsome warrior of Agamemnon's army. One of the stories of his childhood is that Thetis, his mother, held the young Achilles by the heel and dipped him into the waters of River Styx. Through these waters which allegedly had great power, Achilles was thought to be invincible. He was made invincible by waters of the river into which every part of his body had been dipped except the heel by which his mother held him. Because that heel remained in his mother's hand and had not been bathed in the river, it was still vulnerable. It was on that very point that Achilles fell victim when an arrow sped from his adversaries bow and struck the famous warrior on his heel and killed him. To

(1) THE GOSPEL WE STAND FOR

have an “**Achilles’ heel**,” indicates a weakness and comes from this Greek legend. My we all have “*Achilles heel*,” a place where we are vulnerable. For some it may be money. For others it may be worry, a bad temper, selfish ambitions or a coveted position. For Samson it was sexual lust. For Peter it was ambition. For Jonah it was national pride. To leave even one spot exposed to the enemy means defeat.

Now in Roman times slaves had no shoes and wealthy people wore sandals. However, the Roman soldier needed something that was more durable and substantial than a sandal. Napoleon said, “*an army marches on its belly*,” but we know that in reality every soldier needs good footwear. Now a Roman soldier would never go into battle wearing a ordinary leather shoe with a slick bottom. If he did, he would not be able to stand firm. Rather he wore a thick soled, hob nailed, semi boot. Besides having a thick sole, the underside of the soldiers shoe was studded. Just like a football boot these metal studs gave the soldier a firm standing and good grip on rocky terrain. Indeed this is the picture by the Greek word translated “*preparation*,” it means “*a firm footing, a strong foundation*.”

A soldier knows that if he is having trouble with his feet, he cannot stand and if he cannot stand, then he cannot fight. Likewise, we believers need the firm footing that comes from standing on the gospel of peace in order to keep our balance as we fight the Devil. Now in order to open up this statement a little further I want us to divide our study into three parts.

Paul refers to it as “*the gospel of peace*.” And this gospel has always been under attack from Satan. When the Lord Jesus entered this world as a baby, Satan tried to have Him murdered by Herod. Satan did everything he could during the life of Christ to have Him killed, but Christ overcame all those efforts. The book of Acts, the history book of the early church indicates that as the believers began to convey the message of the gospel, the Devil resisted them continually. Paul went on several missionary journeys to take this gospel into the world and he often encountered magicians, sorcerers, and demon-possessed people trying to thwart that effort. Indeed throughout the New Testament we see the gospel being opposed by Satan. Do you recall Paul’s words to the Thessalonian believers ? “*Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again but Satan hindered us*.” (1 Thes 2:18) My Satan hates the gospel and he will do all in his power to hinder the messengers of the cross.

The first three centuries of the church were fraught with the persecution of the church, including the martyrdom of those who loved the Lord. The church then entered into the terror of the Dark Ages, where the testimony of the gospel was almost blotted out, except for a few flickers of faithful groups who believed the truth throughout that time. Then during the time of the Reformation, the light dawned again. The gospel rang out as the birth of the Protestant church took place, and the war between Romanism and Protestantism began. Eventually we come to our own day, and in the providence of God this gospel

continues to be preached. But now modernism, liberalism, ecumenism, materialism are encroaching on the gospel. Paul says as Christians our feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. That is, we need the firm footing that comes from standing on the gospel of peace in order to keep our balance as we fight the Devil. The Gospel we stand for. Now have a look at,

(a) THE MEANING OF THIS GOSPEL:

What does the phrase “*the gospel of peace,*” mean ? Well, the word “*gospel,*” means “*good news,*” so the phrase means “*the good news of peace.*” What exactly is the good news of peace ? Well, think for a moment about,

1. MAN’S RUIN:

Look if you will at (Rom 5:6) This gives us the basic picture of man. Man is weak. Paul says in (5:7) “ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die.” That means that no one would die for an unrighteous man. The implication is that we are weak and unrighteous. Take it a step further for (5:8) defines us as sinners. Moreover (5:9) defines us as unjust. We were unjust, unsaved and the objects of God’s wrath. Paul sums it all up in (5:10) Is this not a good definition of man ? *Weak, unrighteous, sinful, unjust, unsaved, an enemy of God and an object of God’s judgement.* You see, God and man are on two different sides. Don’t let anyone tell you that God is the Father of everybody, that He tolerates everyone, and that everyone is in His family. Nahum says, “ *The Lord is slow to anger and great in power and will not at all acquit the*

wicked.” (1:3) If a man or a woman are enemies of God they will feel His judgement. But what did God do to change that situation ? Well, think about,

2. GODS REMEDY:

Look at (Rom 5:6-8) God is saying, “ *you are enemies, but I’m going to remedy that in the death of Christ.*” Paul says in (5:9) My the gospel of peace is this, man was at war with God, but Christ made peace. Do you see what Paul says in the opening verse ? “ *Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” We are at peace with God. God is on our side. We are reconciled. Paul says this very thing when he writes to the Colossians ? “ *And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death.*” (1:20-21) We are at one with God. God is on our side. Do you know what that means for us as Christian soldiers ? It means we can say “ *Satan you can come against me, but I have shoes that anchor me to the ground. God is on my side.*” This is what helps us stand. My if I had to fight the host of hell in my own strength, I would lose, but I have the firm footing that comes from standing on the gospel of peace. (a)

(b) THE MATTER OF THIS GOSPEL:

What exactly is the gospel that Paul was referring to in this passage ? What is the substance of the gospel ? Look if you will at (1 Cor 15:1-5) You see, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and the salvation He

offers us is the gospel of peace that we firmly stand on. My Satan hates this gospel message because through it he has been defeated. So there is (a) (b) and note,

(c) THE MAGNETISM OF THIS GOSPEL:

Paul put it like this, “ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.* ” (Rom 1:16) Our English word dynamite comes from this Greek word. Do you know what dynamite does in the physical world ? It breaks the rock in pieces. Is this not what the gospel does in the spiritual world ? The Lord Jesus said, “ *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me.* ” (Jn 12:32) The world has witnessed the rise of many men, who because of inborn personal magnetism, and a commanding personality, were able to inspire multitudes to follow them at costs. Napoleon Bonaparte who became Emperor of France was such a man. His personal charm and brilliance were mesmeric. However, his unique power to draw spellbound men to follow him faded away, when he was expelled from the country he had conquered.

But my the Saviour’s magnetism has never been diminished. After two millennia it is more potent than ever for daily He draws uncounted numbers all over the world to Himself as the crucified Saviour.

***Drawn to the cross which Thou hast blessed
With healing gifts for souls distressed
To find in Thee my life, my rest
Christ crucified I come***

My the Lord is drawing souls to Himself, but Satan is continually trying to cause people to turn away from the gospel and even to preach some other gospel. Thus, we note,

(d) THE MISREPRESENTATION OF THIS GOSPEL:

The apostle Paul has some strong words about standing firmly on the only true gospel. Look if you will at (Gal 1:6-8) You see, we have only one true gospel and we must be extremely careful to preach it exactly as the Lord gave it to us, for we will be judged for what we preach. My if you have a false gospel, your beliefs about the person of the Lord Jesus, the only Son of God will be wrong. If you are wrong on the gospel, you will not understand the work of the cross and why the Saviour died. Then again, your views of the need of man will be erroneous. Man is a sinner, Christ died for our sins and the good news is that no one has to stay the way he is. Now is this not the gospel ? *When it comes to serving the Lord, we should always be on the move and making progress, but when it comes to the gospel we need to be immovable and inflexible.* In an age of compromise and apostasy we need to stand firmly on the unchanging gospel for it needs no improvement. (1)

(2) THE GROUND WE STAND ON

Look at what Paul says again “ *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,* ” (6:15) Now shoes have become a major part of our culture. Originally, they were used to protect feet, but now they have become

a fashion item. We don't need that much protection for our feet. Our streets are paved. Our cars, churches, and offices are carpeted. For the most of the time, we aren't walking over rough stones, wading through mud, tramping through dust, or scrolling across thorny bushes. But we need to understand how terrible the terrain was during the time of the Lord Jesus. It was hard to walk over cobbles, rocks, pebbles, and thorns in those parts of the world. All this meant of course that shoes had to perform a certain function. The Roman soldier had to have the kind of shoe that would last for the long marches.

You see, during the time of Roman wars, a method similar to the mine fields of modern warfare was used to trap approaching armies. What would happen is this. A certain army would place razor sharp sticks in the ground, facing the approaching army in hope of piercing feet of the soldiers. *To protect themselves Roman soldiers would wear with this boot with a heavy sole that could not be pierced.* If a soldier's feet were pierced he could not walk. Now he could be the best soldier in the army, but if the bottom of his feet, were injured he was unfit for the battle. Now keeping that all in mind, think of,

(a) THE SITUATIONS WE FACE:

1. FROM SNARES:

Doesn't the Devil delight in throwing all kinds of impediments in our way ? Does he not fill our pathway with all kinds of difficulties ? I am told that during the Vietnam war the Viet-Cong were renowned for hiding

knives, swords and other sharp implements at various places along the narrow foot-paths of the jungle with the hope that South Vietnamese or American soldiers would be lacerated and knocked out of the fighting. Many an American soldier lost a foot or a leg, because he stepped unknowingly and unwarily on one of those booby traps. My are you watching out for the Devil's snares ? Do you realise that along your path he has cunningly hidden traps ? This is why you need to go forward with the gospel boots and with your trust in God, for "*He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence.*" (Ps 91:3) Think of the situation we face,

2. FROM STONES:

In his great vision of the future Isaiah breaks out in song, "*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.*" (Is 52:7) Feet upon the mountains. Sure, there is nothing like mountains to wear out foot gear. Only those equipped with the best shoes possible should try for the heights. Is it not the same in the spiritual realm ? If we are going to scale the heights with God, if we are going to dwell on the mountain top with Him. If we are not going to slip and fall we will need to be shod properly. (a) (b)

3. FROM SAND:

Do you recall what the Lord said to Israel ? "*I have led you forty years in the wilderness, your clothes are not*

waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.” (Deut 29:5) In just the same way, the shoes the firm foundation, provided to us by the gospel of peace, never wear out. Even though we may trek over different sands of indifference and open hostility we are enabled to keep going. These are the situations we face, but look,

(b) THE SHOES WE NEED:

Paul says, “ *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*” Why do we need these shoes ? Let me give you three reasons.

1. To Stand Firm:

You see, on the bottom of the Roman soldier’s shoe were hobnails, little pieces of metal that protruded to give them a grip on the soil. This would enable them to stand firm, to give them stability. So many believers in the world today are unstable. Paul spoke about them about in this letter, he says in (4:14) Unstable people are not grounded in the Word of God. Like children, they believe everything they hear, and are easily led astray because they don’t know the truth of God’s Word. Instability is a serious problem that can hinder our Christian life. The Book of Hebrews warns us, “ *Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.*” (13:9) In other words, don’t believe one strange doctrine after another. Learn the Word of God and stand on the gospel so you know exactly what you believe. Test every doctrine

by the person and work of Jesus Christ, otherwise you will be tossed back and forth until you are carried away from the Lord completely. Warren Wiersbe says “ *Too many who claim be Christians do not know the Word and thus they are falling prey to all sorts of religious groups. They blow from one group to another, and waste their time, energy and money on things that are not eternal.*”

(b) To Give Balance:

Did you notice how Paul puts it ? “ *And your feet shod,*” A soldier does not wear just one shoe into battle. To do so would throw him off balance and cause him to limp when he walked. He knows that he must have both shoes so that he can have footing and balance in battle. Do you know what Satan loves ? ***Unbalanced Christians.*** Those who concentrate so completely on one doctrine or practice of Scripture that they ignore its other teachings and what else God would have them do. I can remember when I was in the Irish Baptist College in Sandown Road Belfast, that barely a day went by that the students were not arguing about election and responsibility. Do you know something ? We are still arguing about it. But the Word of God teaches both doctrines. Someone came to Charles Spurgeon the great Baptist preacher one day and asked him, “ *how do you reconcile predestination and man’s responsibility ?*” Spurgeon wisely replied, “ *I don’t try to reconcile friends.*” So many Christians are riding spiritual hobby horses.

Some are interested in missionary work but they have little time for the Word. Some are interested in Bible

doctrine, but they have no time for evangelism. Some are interested in suppers but they have no time for the lost. Now when our faith is firmly resting on all the truths of the gospel we will have balance and stability in our Christian lives. Mythis balance is vital if we're going to hold our ground against the Devil. You see, when we begin to fight just one crusade, believing that we are doing the will of God, then Satan will quickly move in. He will tear down our confidence in that belief or cause, then knock our spiritual feet from under us. But the Devil cannot move a Christian whose faith is resting in all of God's Word. So we need these shoes to Stand Firm, to Give balance and we need these shoes, to

3.To Move Forward:

You see, the Roman soldiers hobnailed shoes were designed for mobility as well as for strength and protection. They were light enough so that he could turn and move quickly. He was able to adjust and shift his position readily. They were also comfortable so that his feet did not become tired and sore. Do you know the problem in the church today ? Christians are standing still. They are not willing to move forward with the gospel. The Greek word translated "*preparation,*" can also be translated "*readiness.*" "*Having your feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace.*" What is that ? You see, when the gospel of peace enters a man's soul and takes possession of it, it inspires that man with readiness. What for ? Readiness to share the good news with others. That is it. "*Having your feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace.*" Are you wearing the shoes of peace

today ? Do you exhibit a readiness to share the gospel with others ? Is this not what Philip did ? There's the Ethiopian eunuch going down the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. He has the Scriptures, but he has no interpreter. He has no-one to explain these Scriptures to him. What does he need ? He needs someone who has discovered that the secret of the Scriptures is Christ. He needs someone whose feet are shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace. "*Then Philip opened his mouth and preached unto him Jesus.*" (Acts 8:35) What a ministry for a servant of the Lord. Do you realise fellow preacher that this is your ministry ? Sunday School teacher, youth worker is this not your ministry ? William Carey is known as the father of modern day missions. In 1792 in Nottingham, England there was a conference that took place. This young cobbler stood before a group of ministers and speaking from Isaiah (Ch 54) he challenged them about the need for taking the gospel into all the world. John Ryland an elder in one of churches stood and said, "*Young man. Sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without help or mine.*"

Carey's memorable statement on that day was this, "***Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God.***" Where are the Philip's today whose feet are shod with the gospel of peace ? Where are the Carey's today whose feet are the shod with the gospel of peace ? Paul says "*And your feet shod peace,*" (1) (2)

(3) THE GUARANTEE WE STAND WITH

What is this guarantee ? The Lord is on my side. You see, we are at peace with God. We aren't on opposite sides anymore. We are reconciled. God is on our side. Satan may come, but we have shoes that anchor us to the ground. Gospel shoes that tell us God is on our side. What a guarantee.

(a) GIDEON STOOD WITH IT:

In the Book of Judges Midian came to attack Israel, so the people assembled an army of 32,000 soldiers. (Jud 7:2) But the Lord told Gideon that he did not need 32,000 soldiers. God is more interested in quality than quantity. He told him to eliminate everyone who was fearful. Eventually 300 remained and the Lord told Gideon that these men would defeat the host of Midian. Do you know what happened ? When they followed the Lord's instructions, the host of Midian killed each other. Gideon knew that God was on his side.

(b) PETER STOOD WITH IT:

Look if you will at (Jn 18:1) Here Peter stood with the other disciples while the soldiers came to capture Christ. There were probably five hundred of them who marched from the Fort of Antonius. They carried torches to light the way so that they could find Christ. They also carried clubs and staves to beat the Saviour into submission and to fight off His disciples. Christ stepped out to meet them. Look at (18:4-6) Now after they got up and dusted themselves off, the Lord said again, "*Whom seek ye ? And they said Jesus of Nazareth.*" Now when they had

first fallen to the ground no doubt Peter thought, "*what power. Just His name caused what seemed like the whole army to collapse. Since He is that powerful, there's no sense in being taken.*" Do you see what Peter did ? (Jn 18:10) Was Peter aiming for his ear or head ? I think he was probably after his head and Malchus ducked. But you see, Peter was intending to fight the whole Roman army. You say, "*where did he get that kind of confidence ?*" Well, he had just seen a bunch of soldiers fall flat in the dirt at the very name of Christ. Peter was thinking, "*If I get in any trouble, I'll just say, get them Lord.*" He had a sense of invincibility. He sensed that nothing could ever defeat him because he had seen the power of Christ displayed. That's why he took the sword and tried to defend the Lord. He knew Christ was on his side. What a guarantee, the Lord is on our side. (a) (b)

(c) PAUL STOOD WITH IT:

He boldly preached Jesus Christ because he was at peace with God and He knew that God was on his side. (Rom 1:16) Are you bold in the battle because your feet are firmly rooted in confidence in God ? Dr Ted Rendall tells the story that in 1974 a Dutch missionary nurse was captured by Ethiopian guerrillas. As she and a companion were taken from the hospital at gunpoint they were forced to run through the bush toward a hideout. The Dutch nurse, however was unable to keep up. One shoe fell off repeatedly and the guerrillas told the woman she would have to hurry. When she eventually fell to the ground gasping, "*I can't go on. I can't go on.*" A guerrilla bent down and shot her in the head. Are you being defeated by

the enemy of souls because your shoes are not firmly on your feet ? The old Negro spiritual says, “ **When I get to heaven I’m going to out on my shoes.**” My don’t wait till then. Put your shoes on now and hurry, you need them.