

Well, if you would please turn with me in your copy of the Word of God to the book of Ephesians, chapter 6, or to your bulletin where you'll find it printed. And with the Word of God open, let's pray together before we read the Scriptures. O Lord, our God and our Father, the entirety of your Word is truth. We pray this afternoon, our God, that you will sanctify us by your truth, for your word is truth. Come in to the darkness of our minds, O Lord, and bring the light of your word. Come to the trouble of our hearts and bring the peace of your Son. that we might feel the power and presence of Christ here ministering to us, O God, that whatever our state, O Lord, we might be able to say with the hymn writer, it is well with my soul. And we pray, Father, for your people gathered here, that you would bear them up in your arms and carry them close like lambs in your bosom. that whatever troubles surround them in life, they will know Christ close to them as the good shepherd who lays down his life for the flock. We offer these prayers in Jesus' name. Amen. If you would, please turn with me, as we said, to Ephesians 6, and we get back in order again. We were out of order last week, and God used it remarkably, I think, in the lives of some of you by your testimony. Despite my mistake, the Lord continues to strike a straight lick with a very crooked stick. So I'm going to read today, this is the New American Standard, and I'm going to read from verse 10 down to verse 17. This is the word of God. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on all the armor, or the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you'll be able to resist in the evil day. and having done everything to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you'll be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Amen. The grass withers, the flower falls off. but the word of God endures forever. So our sermon today is about having the right gospel footwear. Watch your feet is kind of the watchword for today. We take our text from verse 15, and having showed your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. So the right pair of shoes can really make the difference between life and death. I learned that as a young army cadet in high school. I went to military school, you may remember, in high school. And we would go off to army camps over the summer and do basic training. And in one particular year, we were repelling off the highest viaduct in Scotland.

And I'm pretty terrified of heights anyway. It's not so much the height that it scares me, it's the thought of falling, of course. But we're standing in this viaduct, and I'm seeing these older boys who shaved and drove cars, and they were absolutely terrified, face white as a sheet, and they were climbing over the guardrail and standing on this little ledge that wasn't much thicker than the edge of this pulpit and then the abyss down into the valley below. And they're standing on their hippy-toes on this ledge and leaning back. When it came to my turn and I got out, I realized that our army boots, which were like Second World War issue, I think, were very heavy and they had thick soles that were almost entirely inflexible. And I would have gladly sold Baxter, my dog, which he didn't have then, but I would have sold him anyway to a Korean restaurant if I could have got a pair of sneakers. Much better. So I had the wrong shoes on. We all did these huge, big, thick boots. They were fine for marching, uncomfortable for running, but of no use whatsoever when it comes to rappelling off a viaduct and standing on a tiny ledge to lean back. And I'll never forget the Marine instructor telling me, now lean back. And I'm leaning back. Keep on going. And I keep on going until I'm standing perpendicular on the side of this viaduct, and he says, take your hands, so I'm holding onto the rope, take your hands off the rope, and I'm going like this. Take the other hand off the rope, and I'm going like this. And he's saying, take both hands off the rope, I've got you. So I let go, and he's got me, of course, in the safety rope, and then we abseiled down. And it was actually wonderfully exhilarating, but terrifying at the same time. And the lesson here this morning is that Paul wants you to have the right gospel footwear on your feet. As for shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. The readiness given by the gospel

of peace. Actually, I prefer that translation, which is the ESV. The readiness given by the gospel of peace. Now Paul here is describing, of course, the Roman soldier, the caliga, which was the Roman soldier's half boot that was strapped to the ankle and had very thick rubber, not rubber, leather straps over the foot and over the toes. The toes were open and beneath there was a very thick layer of leather for the sole and there were metal studs driven into the soles of the feet. And those boots were very durable. They helped the Roman soldiers stay on their feet when they were on a long march. And they helped the Roman soldiers hold the line when they were facing a charging enemy. Whenever I was in high school, I ran cross-country and track. And when I began running cross-country, actually in middle school, my mom didn't shell out for spikes. And the spikes you wear in cross-country are like yay long. They're long,

long spikes. And there was a quagmire. And I was running in just regular flats. And it was like running on a treadmill. I was doing this and going nowhere. You have to have some spikes or some protruding things to give you traction in the mud, and these Caligas provided the Roman soldier with exactly that ability. And so, Paul is making the point that when it comes to standing firm against the devil, you've got to have the right footwear if you are to hold the line and not be pushed back off the battlefield. And the footwear, he says, is the gospel of peace and the readiness that will give you, not just to hold the line, but to lean in when the devil charges against you. Now the question is, what does Paul mean by the gospel of peace? And commentators have a number of thoughts, as you might imagine, and they all have merit. There is, first of all, the fact that we have peace with God, objectively in the gospel, that Christ has died in our place for our sins, and God is no longer at war with you, right? The objective peace with God that every Christian enjoys. Therefore, having been justified by faith, Paul says, Romans 5 verse 1, we have peace, with God and accessed by faith into the grace in which we stand. The second suggestion is the subjective peace of God that guards the heart of the Christian, that we have peace amidst the trials and tribulations of life. And the third suggestion is that we have suggestion from the commentators is a more combative posture, our willingness to share the gospel of peace with a lost world. And I think there's some merit in all three of them, and we're going to work through them together, because it's a little bit like those three things Objective peace, subjective peace, and then the act of sharing of the gospel of peace are almost like the champagne in a champagne pyramid. When you pour the top, it kind of cascades down. When you have the objective peace of God, then that's the only foundation on which to enjoy the subjective peace of God. And having the objective peace of God and enjoying the subjective peace of God is the best foundation on which to share the gospel with a lost and dying world. So the one flows to another like water and wet. And so we're gonna work through those together this morning. To stand firm against the devil, Paul says, you must enjoy the peace, you must enjoy the peace of God. Sorry, I'm in the wrong part of my notes. You must know that you have peace with God, that's the first point. To stand firm against the devil, you must know that you have peace with God, that God is no longer against you and that you're no longer against him. He is your friend, he is your father, he is no longer your angry judge. And the reason for that should be fairly self-explanatory. No one can fight a war on two fronts. Hitler learned that lesson in

World War II, and had he not had to, we might not have beaten him, at least not as quickly. He's fighting the Allies to his west, and he's fighting Russia to his east, and his forces were divided, and he lost the battle. And it'll be very, very difficult for you to stand against the devil if your conscience is offended and you're not sure your sins have been forgiven and you fear that God is still at war with you. So the first thing you've got to know when you're fighting against the devil is whose side are you on and that God is your father, not your judge, and that he has forgiven you all of your sins. So you must know that you have peace with God. And that's been a big emphasis in Ephesians. If you go back to Ephesians 2, you'll see that's been Paul's whole point. You remember how Paul talks about how we were dead in our trespasses and in our sins, in which we walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who's at work in the sons of disobedience. Among them, Paul says, we also once walked in the lust of our flesh and of our mind and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. We were children of wrath. God was wrathful with us. We were dead in our sins. We were dominated by our lusts. We were driven along like dead fish in a toxic stream, downstream with the rest of the world. And we were deserving of the wrath of God. We're dead. Like Lazarus in the tomb, Lazarus wasn't going, help, help, let me out, he's dead. And we weren't going, help, help, I'm dead in my sins. No, we were dead, D-E-A-D, and Paul says, but God, being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ. By grace you've been saved, right? God did it, just like Lazarus. Lazarus come out, God spoke to us, be alive, and our heart became alive. And the first thing a living being does is breathe. And the first thing a living soul does is trust. Seeing himself as a sinner, seeing Christ as a savior, the living soul, lurches forward in helpless faith, embraces Christ, and that moment, sin is forgiven and salvation is obtained. If you look on in Ephesians 2, Paul continues this theme of peace. He wants these Gentile Christians to remember a former time. Therefore he says, remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hands. He's saying, remember the time when you were called acrobustia, that was a racial slur, as bitter and resentful as any racial slur thrown about in America or any other part of the world today. You're the uncircumcised ones, the Jews said. And Paul said, that was a circumcision carried out by human hands. And there's only so far a human surgeon can cut. But he says now, you're the circumcision of Christ. You've been circumcised with

a circumcision made without hands. And actually, that's in Colossians, which we read at the same time, but this is the point Paul's making. Now you've got, you were at that time on circumcision. And you were called that by the so-called circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hands. Remember that you were at that time, and he lists the problems of unconverted people, these unconverted Gentiles. At that time, you were separate from Christ. excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and no God, without God in the world. You had no Christ, you had no hope, you had no God, no place in the covenant. You were cut off from the commonwealth of Israel. You weren't part of the people of God. That was then. And then Paul says, but now, but now, in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, for he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall by abolishing in his flesh the enmity which is the law of commandments contained in ordinances so that in himself he might make the two, Jew and Gentile, into one new man thus establishing peace and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross by it having put to death the enmity And he came and preached peace to you who are far away and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have our access in one spirit to the Father. Now there's an awful lot there and I haven't got time to go into it, but Paul is saying that the world is at war. Jews is at war with the Gentiles. And there's a tribal warfare that separates every nation under earth, whether it's the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, whether it's the Slavs and the Croats in former Yugoslavia. There's a tribal conflict in this world. Send off, make racist of us all by nature. And the problem is not so much that we're at war with other men, but that we're at war with God. And if you won't give God his place, if you won't recognize God as God, and you won't give him his place, you'll never give anybody else their place if it costs you yours. And that's the foundation of every relational conflict on earth. And the way to have peace down here in our marriages, the way to have peace down here in our communities, is to first of all have peace with God. And the way to have peace with God, Paul says, is only through Christ. He is our peace. In that day on the cross when God said, Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and the sword that you and I deserved to have plunged into our hearts, God plunged it right into the heart of Christ. And he received what we deserve, the wrath of God. And we receive what he deserves, the peace of God. And there's peace with God then made between earth and heaven. And that's the first foundation of spiritual warfare. If you aren't absolutely sure that God is your father and your sins have been forgiven, you'll

never have true courage to stand against the devil. Do you know that? Have you looked at Christ? Have you trusted Christ as your savior? Have you come to him as a leper and felt the Lord Jesus put his hand on your head and said, I am willing to make you clean, be cleansed. That's the first foundation. You must know that you have peace with God. The second thing when it comes to fighting against the devil is you must know and enjoy the peace of God. And you see that as a common theme. Paul writes Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, and Philemon all at the same time, so there's lots of interplay in thinking. But if you look at Philippians 4, the very famous verse, right? If you haven't got it, you can listen, it's fine, and you'll know this well. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing. Be anxious for nothing. But in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. We live in an anxious world, and by nature we all have anxious hearts. The thought that I can't cope, I don't know what to do, what'll happen? And we're fearful, don't know how things are gonna turn out, and fear grips us, and anxiety stirs up our hearts. And we need to know the peace of God. That whatever circumstances seem to be against us, God is for us. That's a huge thing to know. And a good illustration of that, I used to disciple a young man who was in the army. And he deployed to the Middle East during some of the recent wars. And this young man, as many men, wrestled with pornography. And he told me, there's all the difference in the world when I go out to face Al-Qaeda. or the Taliban and my conscience is clean and I know God is not hostile to me. and I'm walking with God and he's on my side, he's at peace with me. And when I go out with my conscience defiled, when I go out with my conscience defiled, he said, it's like every bullet, every piece of shrapnel is a potential disciplinary force in the hands of God who is grieved by my behavior. That's a powerful illustration. We have to be confident, not just that we have peace, we enjoy peace with God, but that God is not against us, either in his retributive justice, because we're not converted, or in his disciplinary, fatherly displeasure as we walk before him as Christians. And Paul here is saying the way we do that is to give our hearts to God, to draw near to God, and to give him all of our anxieties, and of course all of our sins, and to walk in close fellowship with him, so that we will see that we always have a reason to be joyful. Because God is for us, he's not against us. And his providence is arraigned. Not to drive me out, but to gather

me in. Not to tear me down eternally, but to build me up and to strengthen me. And so I can live conscious in sunshine and in shadow that God is for me. And that knowledge surrounds me in a blanket of peace. And you'll see that's kind of Paul's argument in Romans 5, when he says, therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God, and have access by faith into the grace in which we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And then he says, and not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope, and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts. And you see, You can't know joy in trouble if you don't know peace with God. Because if you don't know peace with God, you can't be sure that your troubles aren't sent by God against you. But once you know that God is for me, that I've been forgiven my sins, that God is my Father, and even when He disciplines me, I know He's on my side, and His providence and all of His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth is arraigned to help me. Then I can have great peace, and great confidence, and great assurance. You know the story of the hymn

we sang earlier on, Horatius Spafford? Horatius Spafford was a successful businessman in the 1860s and 70s in Chicago. He had extensive real estate holdings and was a very godly man. He supported the work of D.L. Moody heavily and Arasanky in their evangelistic crusades. He was a very generous philanthropist. But a couple of disasters happened.

He had four children. One of them was a son, three daughters. In 1870, his son, his toddler son, died of scarlet fever. It broke his heart. The next year, on the heels of that disaster, the great fire of Chicago swept through the city and burned up most of his real estate holdings and threatened him with financial ruin. Soon after that, to give his family some respite from these sorrows, he plans a family vacation to England to follow D.L. Moody on one of the evangelistic crusades through England, Scotland, and Wales. But just before they leave on the ship, he was detained, Spafford was, by a urgent business matter, so he sends his wife and his three daughters on the ship across to England. And on the way across the ship, the Vildachav was the name of the ship. It was a big storm and it collided into a British ship that was an iron ship and the British ship cut the Vildachav in half and it sank in minutes.

And Mrs. Spafford was on the ship and she was holding on to her baby daughter and trying to hold on to her two other daughters, but the waves were so strong they were swept out of her hands. And she was left clinging to a piece of driftwood and was picked up soon afterwards. And you know the story, she gets to England, of course, Spafford knows none of that, and he gets to England and his wife writes him a telegram with two words. survived alone. He gets on the boat, next day,

sails to England, and on the way the captain of that boat stopped at the place they thought the Vildrejav sank, and there a moment's silence in honor of the dead, and it was then He wrote the hymn, when peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows rule, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul. Though Satan should buffet, though trial should come, let this blessed assurance control that Christ has regarded my helpless estate and has shed his whole, his blood, his own blood for my soul. My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul. And you know, therefore, you see how the peace of God in the gospel or peace with God in the gospel and the peace of God in his providence go hand to hand. It's only that he knows his sins forgiven, his sins nailed to the cross of Christ, that's the foundation on which he experiences the peace of God as he stands in the very place where his three daughters lost their lives. Because it's built upon the conviction that if God did not spare his own son, for me, that I can trust him in the darkness. He is too wise to make a mistake and too loving to cause me a needless tear. And so Christian, as you fight the devil, God says, you must know that you're at peace with me. And you must know the peace of me, that I am on your side. Even when I seem to be hostile to you in my providence, you can trust that I am not against you. I'm not sending trials into your life to destroy you. The worst I'll ever do to you, God says, is whip you into heaven. And when the whip comes on your back or your derriere, don't see the whip, but see the hand of the one who holds it. It's the hand of your father. And then to stand firm against the devil, we must know the peace with God, the peace of God. We also gotta be willing to share the gospel of God. Because when you know the peace with God, and you know peace of God guarding your heart and all that blessing that comes, you'll want to give that away, won't you? There are a few things actually that assure me that I know God and that I'm at peace with him. Few things better to lead me to that conviction than sharing the gospel with people who know none of those things. It's good for them to hear the gospel, oh, but it's good for me to share the gospel. And we need to pray every day, Lord, open up a door for me to share the gospel. Remember one time when I was a physician, I was conscious I wasn't sharing the gospel very much. And so I decided to pray and fast. God said to me, well, why don't you ask me to give you opportunities? I thought, good idea. So I prayed and fasted. And as I was praying and fasting, I realized I couldn't go to the doctor's room at lunchtime because it would look pretty obvious. Why are you not eating? I'm fasting. Why are you fasting? Because I want to share the gospel with you heathens. So, I went to one of the doctor's rooms at the NICU where I was working then,



and nobody was there. There's a line of doctor's rooms for the on-call doctors, and I was there, and there's an en-suite bathroom there, and I'm in the room reading my Bible and praying. I'm thinking, Lord, this is not working out very well. I'm praying for you to give me an opportunity to share the gospel, and there's nobody here but me. And then there's a knock at the door. And this Hindu doctor opened the door and walked in and goes, oh, I'm sorry, he said. And I said, no, it's okay, come on, what's wrong? He goes, I was looking to use one of the restrooms in these empty bedrooms. I said, oh, come on, it's totally fine. And as he walked in, he looks at my table and goes, is that a Bible? And I said, Yes, it is. He said, I've been reading the Bible recently, he said, and I can't understand a word of it. Could you explain the Bible to me? And I thought, there's a God in heaven. I mean, it was just the most amazing thing in all the world, right? So ask the God of heaven to open an opportunity to share the gospel, and there are few things better than sharing the gospel with someone who doesn't know God to convince you and show you that you do. and to remind you that you have peace with God, though they don't, and that you enjoy the peace of God, which they desperately need. Let me finish with this, if you let me spoil your patience just for one more minute. Anatolius of Constantinople was a fourth century Christian, and he was a minister, and he engaged valiantly in the battle against the Christological heresies in the fourth century and fifth century, and was persecuted for it severely, and he wrote this beautiful poem. It's a poem about the disciples going across the sea in Galilee. I leave with you this morning. Fierce was the wild billow, and dark was the night. Oars labored heavily, and foam glimmered white. Trembled the mariners, peril was nigh. Then said the God of God, Peace it is I. Ridge of the mountain wave, lower thy crest. Wail of Eurycleidon, be thou at rest. Sorrows can never be, and darkness must fly. When saith the light of light, peace it is I. Jesus deliverer, come thou to me. Soothe thou my voyage over life's sea, And thou, when the storm of death roars sweeping by, Whisper, O truth of truth, Peace, it is I. That sums it up. When you fight against the devil, and the devil fights against you. When the devil comes and turns your life, by the permission of God, into ground level zero destruction, like he did in Job's life, and all of the circumstances of your life seem to say God is against you. And that conviction gets into your soul. It'll drive you off the field of battle. And the secret is to get back to the gospel. And remember, you've got peace with God. And because of that, you always have the peace of God. And nothing in heaven above or on earth beneath. can be against you if God, because

of Christ, stands for you. Let's pray. And if you need to  
nip out to work, I totally understand. I'm sorry for keeping us beyond  
the time. Let's pray. Father in heaven,  
we thank you this morning, oh God, and this afternoon for your  
word. It's good for our souls. We thank you, Father, that as  
we fight against a hostile devil and a hostile world, but we don't  
have a hostile God. Though there was a time when  
we were hostile in mind and engaged in evil deeds against you, and  
were much better at making war with our neighbor than making  
peace with him, yet you have come on a great cause to yourself.  
You have made peace with us, and now we have peace with you.  
And so, Lord, you're on our side, and I pray that thought will  
be like the studs on the bottom of a Roman soldier's boot, enabling  
us to hold the line and to march with joy when the devil attacks,  
because we make our way from our guilt through your grace  
to the glory. May this thought give us courage  
to stand and withstand than many relentless attacks of the darkness. For Jesus'  
sake, amen.