

31. The preparation of the Gospel of peace

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Men's footwear are relatively simple – running shoes, work boots, dress shoes, flipflops. But if we are going to talk about ladies' shoes, it is going to take a couple days just to list all the different styles, colors, and shapes – from stilettos, sandals, clogs, flats, wedges, heels, boots, to tennis shoes, and many more.

Generally men desire comfort more than looks in shoes, but for ladies, they will endure torturing pain if their shoes make them look more beautiful. Look at this pair of stilettos. Guys, can you walk in these shoes? If I somehow manage to get in them, I would get high anxiety and motion sickness at the same time.

Haven't you heard a phrase, "When your feet hurt, everything hurts?" Your shoes must fit well for you to walk a long distance and move around quickly as well as effectively. Especially if you are a soldier, your footwear must be in excellent condition and ready for battles.

Once the belt and the breastplate have been fitted into position, the soldier puts on his tough military footwear. Let's learn from the Lord the truth of the preparation of the Gospel of peace.

A. THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Ephesians 6:15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace;

1) Stability that comes from the preparation of the Gospel of Peace

The sandals of a Roman soldier, a.k.a. caligae, were simply constructed. It was just a leather sole strapped to his leg by strands of leather, but on the bottom of the sole were metal studs or nails. The purpose of the studs were to provide the soldier with an excellent foundation like the modern day shoe treads that would prevent him from slipping or sliding. If he was moving up a hill or mountain, he could dig his studded sandals in and hold his ground. This would prove particularly important when he encountered his enemy, because his sandals can become a weapon to break his enemy's kneecap or shin bone.

The military successes of both Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar were due in large measure to their armies' being well fitted with excellent footwear and able to undertake long marches at incredible speed over rough terrain. Their enemies didn't expect that the armies of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar could advance that fast.

When I was in senior high school in my homeland Sweden, I was in training for Judo. If I can summarize the majority of Judo tactics in one phrase is "taking your opponent off balance." One of my favorite Judo skills was known as "Tomoe Nage" in Japanese. It specially works well when my opponent pushes me hard or is stronger than me or when he does not have a good footing. When that happens, I simply roll onto my back as I yank him down toward me and put my foot on his abdomen as a pivot point and flip him over my head hard. This technique usually takes the breath out of his lungs and he gets disoriented for a few seconds and cannot breathe.

It is the same spiritually. We need to have firm stability in our spiritual footing with the preparation of the Gospel of peace all the time, otherwise our enemy satan will trip us and makes us fall.

2) Protection that comes from the preparation of the Gospel of Peace

Imagine a strong soldier clad in armor from head to his sword but with no shoes on, a barefoot soldier. Imagine how quickly the rough terrain would tear his feet and injure him. Soon, despite the fact that he had all the equipment he needed otherwise, he would be out of combat. His unprepared feet would cause him to be unfit to fight.

Sometimes in a battle, the enemy would sharpen sticks and implant them in the holes on the ground, sticking up at an angle. If you were to be marching across a field and step on one of those holes, sharpened sticks caused excruciating pain, to say the least. These were "first century land mines." If you wounded your foot, you would be seriously immobilized. Worse yet, if the injury were severe enough, infection could set in, or loss of blood could cost you your life.

Do you know how many ill-trained and ill-equipped self-proclaimed Christians become Mormons each year? Many. They were duped because they do not know the truth of God and they are not equipped with the Gospel of Jesus properly.

B. WHAT IS THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE?

To be honest with you, this v15 was not altogether easy to understand for me when I was a young Christian. Now that I've been studying the Word of God for sometime, I am starting to understand it better.

Let's look at the word 'preparation' or 'readiness' in other version like NIV. The Greek word for 'preparation' is "hetoimasia". This term is applied to a ship's tackling for fishing. Remember what the Lord Jesus said to Peter and his brother Andrew when He recruited these two fishermen from Galilee:

Matthew 4:18-19 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

The sandals or shoes Paul describes in Ephesians 6 not only provides stability to help the believer hold ground and protection from enemy's trap, but they also provide mobility. These combat footwear are not dress shoes that are uncomfortable or that you want to keep perfectly clean. These shoes will allow you to move at a moment's notice.

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

These words "give a defense of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" is what we call 'apologetic' in theological terms. A profound theologian Benny Hinn once said, "Some Christians are into apologetic. What is there for them to apologize?" What arrogance in ignorance! Yes, we should always be ready to give a defense of what we believe in Jesus Christ; no, we don't apologize for what we believe in Christ like that dumb comment by Benny Hinn. We need to be ready at a moment's notice to seize opportunities to share the Gospel.

Some people say, "The Lord never opens up opportunities for me to share my faith." I believe that He does often, but we are the ones not paying attention to His lead. Opportunities are all around us. Sometimes we simply need to push on that door of opportunity a little bit. We need to talk to people. Jesus sat down with the woman at

the well, asked her for a drink of water, began to converse with her, and transitioned into a spiritual conversation.

People rarely will come knocking on your door to ask what they must do to be saved. Generally there will be other kinds of opportunities, but you need to have your spiritual radar up, if you will, and seize the moment when it comes.

This armor of God is not only for holding ground; it is also for gaining ground. We gain ground when our shoes are on and we walk through the doors of opportunity God opens for us.

C. WHO SHOULD HAVE THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE?

If you are a born-again Christian, you should and it is your privilege. It is not a job only for evangelists, pastors, elders, deacons, or Bible teachers. Jesus didn't commission a few selected people, but everyone.

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

When is the last time you looked for an opportunity to share the Gospel? When is the last time you prayed for an unsaved person by name to come to Christ? When is the last time you personally brought an unbeliever to church with you?

Remember, the primary way that God reaches people is through people – people like you and me.

D. HOW DO WE HAVE THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE?

I believe that we overcomplicate this thing we call evangelism or witnessing. Let me simplify it for you.

I see two steps:

1) Your testimony

One of the most effective tools you have in your evangelistic toolbox is telling your story – your personal testimony about how Jesus changed your life.

It is the power of a changed life. Use your story, because it is a way to preach to a person without preaching at a person. People don't like to be preached to. But your story is a bridge. You can say, "Let me tell you my story. I didn't always believe these things. Here is what I used to be and how I used to live and what I used to think. But here is what I heard, and this is how Jesus changed my life." They can argue with a sermon, but they can't argue with your story of transformation. They can not argue with what God has done for you. So use that story to build the bridge. However, let your testimony be less than seven minutes. If it is longer, you will start to lose their attention.

Remember, it is not about you; it is all about Jesus. So when you tell your story, don't glorify or exaggerate your sinful and carnal past. Don't boast about what you gave up for God, but about what God gave up for you. We gave up hopelessness, guilt, judgment, and a one way ticket to hell. And in their place, God gave us purpose, meaning, and heaven. And again remember, it is not about you. It is all about Jesus.

However, your born-again life must back up your testimony. If you still live a carnal life as you used to, please don't tell unbelievers that you are a Christian. Tell them you are a follower of Allah, they probably will believe you.

2) Simple scriptural step by step instruction

After you share your testimony, always make a beeline to the cross.

Your words and my words don't mean a whole lot in the scheme of eternity. But Scripture is a different story. Please memorize these verses and make them be a phrase within your dialogue and let them know that why they need to be saved:

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

When you witness to an unbeliever, be nice, polite, and tactful. Unbelievers are lost but they are not dumb. As a matter of fact, many of them are much smarter than you and I put together. Tact is the ability to make a point without making an enemy.

If you are witnessing to an unbeliever because you deeply care about that person's soul and eternal life, he or she will see it in your voice and your body language. But if you are doing it to make another notch on your spiritual belt, they don't want to hear you. And I don't blame them either.

If the person refuses, be courteous to leave him or her with kindness. That person may not be ready to be saved at that time, but maybe later. Your job can be planting a seed of the Gospel of Jesus into one's heart. Someone might come by and water it. Then the Holy Spirit will bring it to harvest. We all work together as a team.

One more thing, please pray for that person's soul while you are witnessing.

Zechariah 4:6b 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the Lord of hosts.

Remember that it is by the power of the Holy Spirit. Be sensitive to His leading. He will tell you in your heart whom you need to witness to and when and how.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Ask the Lord to equip you through His Word, the Bible, by having your DAILY devotion and DAILY prayers to Him.

2) Ask the Lord for an opportunity to share the Gospel with someone today. Always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you.

3) Jesus doesn't need lawyers to defend His sacrifice for us, He needs witnesses to tell others about Him.