



Armor
Part 4 – Feet Fitted with Readiness
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Today, we're going to open up the message by reading Ephesians 6: 10 -18. We're just going to start with the text that we've been talking about and will continue to talk about in the weeks to come. Before we do that, I just want to invite you to pray with me before we get into God's word.

Father, we just come to you. I just want to pause for a second and invite you, Lord, to speak to each one of us individually. I know we're each walking into this place coming from a different set of circumstances and perhaps needing to hear something specific this morning. I pray by the power of your Spirit that you would do that, that you would speak directly into our hearts. It's in Jesus' name we pray... Amen.

Ephesians 6 - ***10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

As you can tell, today, we are talking about footwear. A couple of weeks ago, some buddies and I went out to Colorado. It was kind of a bonding trip. One of things that has kind of been on my bucket list – I've always wanted to do – was to climb a 14,000 ft mountain. In Colorado, they call them fourteeners. We decided we were going to do that before we went.

On the way out, we were having to decide what to pack. I've been out to Colorado in September in the past and the peaks of those mountains have been covered with two feet of snow. So, we really needed to think through what was going to be required to successfully climb this mountain.

When you get out there, for me, there is a handful of things that I'm processing. First of all, one of the challenges of climbing a fourteener is altitude, especially a guy that comes from the Midwest. I think, specifically with me, I really struggle getting over altitude sickness. I just struggle with oxygen deprivation and the difference. Even in the condo, running up the stairs, I would get to the top of the stairs and my head would be spinning. I'm thinking, *How in the world am I going to climb a mountain when I feel this crummy.*

Another thing is you have to think through timing. When you climb a fourteener, specifically in Colorado, they are infamous for early afternoon storms that come out of nowhere. So, you have to take off early. So, generally, you'll start climbing in the wee hours of the morning, you'll get to the top as fast as you can, take your pictures, enjoy the peak, and then you make your way down. That's because a lot of times, a storm will blow over the top of that mountain after lunch time and people find themselves in dangerous situations. In fact, lightning strikes are one of the most common threats when you're climbing a mountain like that. Believe it or not, I have a friend who lives in Branson who got struck by lightning climbing one of these. She has to work extra hard to comb her hair in the morning, but she's normal, as far as I can tell.

Another thing is how do I dress? September can be hot in Colorado and September can be absolutely freezing as you climb into the high altitude. So, we're processing all these things and we set out to climb Quandary Peak. Quandary peak is a 14,000 ft mountain. It's one of the easier climbs in Colorado. But the climb itself is about six and a half miles up to the peak of the mountain and then six and a half miles back. So, you're looking at about half a marathon's worth of distance. And, of course, you're ascending thousands of feet and then you're also dealing with altitude and you're also dealing with pretty intense terrain.

We sat out that morning. It was super exciting. As we take off, the elevation change starts kind of mild. You're in the woods and there are squirrels and birds, and everything is looking up. When you come up out of the tree line and you get above the trees, it is a whole different world. The wind is blowing, the trail on the path is sometimes hard to even see and for us, we walked for miles through what was just like these bolder fields. Half the time, you were scrambling with your hands on the rocks, climbing up over these. I'm telling you, the altitude whooped my rear. I mean there were points where I was just borderline managing passing out. You would stop and kind of catch your breath. It was interesting that, in about 30 second, you could bounce back and feel really good. And then in a matter of three steps, your body is screaming for oxygen again. And just muscles searing.

We kept charging. We charged up the mountain and sure enough we made it to the peak. On the way, we met some new friends here (picture of goats). These goats are looking at you like what are you doing up here? No joke, we took that with our own camera. They're just kind of standing there looking at all these dummies. And then at the top of the peak, we got a picture with the guys there. It was obviously an awesome moment. As you can see, I'm wearing some strangely short shorts on top of that mountains. But you know what I say. When the sky is out the thighs are out; let them breath.

As I mentioned, we're talking about footwear and as you look at my little closet here, as I'm making the decision to climb a mountain like that, coming back down, I was thinking to myself that If you didn't

have the right footwear, you would be in a pile of trouble. If you wore cowboy boots, you would break your ankles. If you wore these... I don't know why we wear these (men's dress shoes); they're so stupid. I put them on, and they hurt my feet. If you wore these, you'd be in huge trouble. You wouldn't want to wear your Chuck Taylors or your Converse. And you surely wouldn't want to be wearing flip flops. We were even processing how you would... You know, if somebody rolled an ankle or got hurt or broke a leg, just getting them down out of the bolder field would be a nightmare. I chose these Merrells; it was the right choice. We got up and down that mountain and really got to celebrate an awesome victory, having done it together.

Making the transition, thinking about spiritual life, we've been talking about the context of the life that you guys are walking about in every day. Paul says that you're engaged in the spiritual battle, that we live in a broken shell of this earth, and it is even growing more so broken with every day that passes. He makes a statement that you need to have the right footwear.

Here's the way he framed it up: **...and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.** There are a couple of words that stick out to me in this phrase. The first one is *feet fitted*. When we were climbing that mountain, even if you had the right shoe, if it was too small or too big, you'd be compromised. And so it is in the faith. He's making this analogy. You need to have the right footwear and it needs to fit. You need to be able to stand firm, hold your ground, and move through adversity.

Another thing that pops out to me is the word *readiness*. For me, as I study this, readiness happens to be the focal point of this statement.

He goes on to say *the gospel of peace*. He qualified the gospel. There are a lot of qualities that we can assign to the gospel. It is freeing, it is saving, it is forgiving, it is loving, but in this particular passage and the context of battle, Paul specifically draws out the characteristics of the gospel that is peace. A peace that surpasses all understanding. When I circle back to that idea of readiness, I understand it's super important, not just that you've experienced the gospel, but that you are ready to put it to work, you're ready to apply it to your life.

A memory came to me. I think it's one of my earliest childhood memories. It came to me as I was processing this whole concept from the gospel of peace. I need to talk with my parents, but I think I was three to four years old. I know I was younger than five. This memory was we lived in this little farmhouse in Illinois, out in the middle of the cornfields. My parents had just experienced the loss of a dear friend; she had committed suicide. I was home with Mom, and Dad was off at work, farming. We were up in her bed, upstairs in this little farmhouse. She was crying, she was upset over the loss of her friend. I was in bed with her and my heart, my spirit was panicked. I was scared to death. I can still remember that. I'm 40 years old now and I can remember that feeling.

As I'm gripped in fear, the next memory I have is my dad walking up the stairs. He walks into the room, and I remember my feeling changing. As soon as I saw Dad, I knew that everything was going to be okay. This peace just came over my heart. Oh, by the way, my mom has been a hero in my life a thousand times over. It just so happens that dad played the role of the hero in this story.

When Dad walked in the room, peace came over the room. Now, did that change the circumstances that were happening at that time? No. We were still dealing with loss, there were still tears. It was still gut-wrenching. It was still sad. But because Dad was there, my spirit as a little boy was at peace. And so it is when the gospel comes into your life and you fit it to your feet and you stand ready and the gospel of peace is firming you up in the difficult circumstances of your life.

My question for you is are you ready? I think that there are two mindsets that come to my mind as I process through a spiritual battle that I'm in. One has probably dominated way too much of my life. I want to frame it up with Peter's story from the scripture. But the first passage, the first mindset that I want to look at, John records it. Here's kind of the background.

The background is it's Holy Week. The disciples are in the upper room, it's Thursday night on the eve of Jesus being arrested in the Garden. They are at the final meal, Jesus washes the disciples' feet and then he begins to teach them and help them understand what's about to happen. He says, "I must be betrayed, I am going to suffer, and I am going to die. But don't be afraid. I'm going to send the Holy Spirit who is going to support you and give you strength. It's better that I should go so that the Holy Spirit could come."

Peter, being zealous and having a dear relationship with Jesus, pipes up and these are his words: (John 13) **"Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now. But you will later."** He's foreshadowing Peter's death. As you guys know, Peter was, according to Christian history, crucified upside down. But Peter said to him, **"Lord, why can I not follow you right now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus replied, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly I say to you a rooster will not crow until you deny me three times."** As you know, when Jesus was taken, the disciples scattered. As Jesus was swept away, Peter followed from a distance. According to the scripture, on three different occasions, people identified him as one having been with Jesus. Each time they identified him as a follower of Jesus, in a panicked, filled with fear, Peter denied, "I don't know this man. I've never seen him before." The third time he denied Jesus, just had Jesus had said, the rooster crowed and Peter's heart was broken.

You see, this mindset is when we feel like things are falling apart. That's the assignment that we give. "Woe is me. Oh no, what is happening? Things are falling apart." And when we have that mindset, the feelings and emotions that follow are that we are caught off guard. We're fearful, we're anxious, we're panicked, and we begin self-preserving. It's a mindset that has you on your heels.

Here's the other alternative. I fast forward in Peter's story. Peter denied Jesus three times. Jesus died, and after three days, he was resurrected. He spent about 40 days appearing to the disciples and proving to them that he was in fact the Messiah and proving to them that he was victorious over death.

In the third encounter that Peter had with Jesus, Peter and the guys were out fishing. They see Jesus standing on the shoreline. He's preparing some fish and some bread for breakfast and the guys come in and they eat breakfast with Jesus. Jesus grabs Peter and he pulls off to the side. Jesus asks Peter a question three times. He said, "Peter, do you love me?" Peter says, "Yes, Lord, I love you." Jesus says, "Feed my sheep. Peter, do you love me?" Peter says, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus says,

“Then tend my sheep.” The third time, Jesus says, “Peter, do you love me?” Peter says, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus says, “Then tend to my sheep.” In that moment, Peter was restored. Jesus picked him up, put him back on his feet.

A short time later, the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem for another Holy Week, the Week of Pentecost. They were in the upper room, they were praying again. At this time, the Holy Spirit, while they were in the midst of prayer, fell on them like tons of fire and the disciples began to speak in other languages. During this Holy Week, Jewish travelers from all countries come in and begin to hear these men speaking in their language. They say, “How can it be that these men from Galilee know our language?” Some were amazing and filled with wonder while still others said, “Oh, they’re just a bunch of drunks. They’ve been up drinking all night.” At which Peter takes a stand.

Here’s where we pick up our story. Acts 2 - **12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13 But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.” 14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.**

Peter took his stand, and he preached the gospel. And on that day, 3,000 souls were added to the kingdom. Here’s the difference in Peter’s mindset. He went from things are falling apart to things are falling into place.

God gave us the Old Testament so that we know where we come from. He gave us the New Testament that we understand where we are going. In the end, he gave us Revelation so that we know how the bow ties around the end, and we can have hope with clarity.

When you change your mindset to things falling into place, you understand Matthew 24. Jesus is talking about the end of times that’s coming soon. He said that tribulation and famine and wars and nation rising up against nation, that it will pick up like birth pains, like contractions. I’m a dad of six kids; I know how this works. The contractions come and they hurt, but they increase in severity and in proximity to one another until all of the sudden, a child is born, and a great gift is given to the world. That is the course that we are on as believers, and when we know that, we rest in it, we stand upon it, we say, “Things are falling into place; I’m not surprised.” When this is your mindset, the feelings, emotions, and actions that come out of you are that you are prepared, you're peaceful, you're clear minded, you're unwavering, and you're purposeful. And you see the difference in Peter’s life.

This summer, Ted preached on a house that was built on two different foundations. One house was built on sand, another was built on the rock. That house that was built on sand, when the wind and the storms came and they burst against the house, great was its destruction. And so it will be for any of us who stand on anything but the gospel. If you stand on your financial security, if you stand on how people view you in your life, if you stand on relationships, your boyfriend or your girlfriend, all of those things will inevitably let you down because they are not God and they will fail if you put them in that place.

I believe that there are too many believers that are wearing flip flops in a sword fight. By the way, these are the stupid flip flops with the bottle cap opener in the bottom. Really? These are the same dummies that walk into truck stops, use the truck stop restroom, get a six pack, get in their pickup, and then they pop one. That's gross. By the way, these are not mine. They are Matt Gumms, literally.

So, when we go into our battle, here's the analogy that we need to look to. Paul, like all other Jews under Roman occupation, is painfully familiar with the strength, the power, and the way that the Romans wear their armor. And specifically, their footwear was super important for the Roman Soldier because they are on conquest. They are marching across hundreds of miles and picking fights. These are actually called caligae. This Roman sandal. And the way they were designed is that the leather that went around the ankle was soft and pliable. That way, it could be fitted to the soldier's foot. The bottom piece of leather was extremely durable and tough. And then they hobnailed – it was almost like cleats – through the bottom so that when they took their stand or they stood their ground, they could grip the ground.

Many of you guys have probably seen the tortoise, or pictures of the tortoise, or movies when the Roman soldiers would lock their shields, dig in their ground, and they would hold their ground. Paul is using this illustration. This is the way that the man or woman of God is to outfit their feet, standing with readiness on the gospel of peace. So, when you go into war, number one is it's wise to check your mindset. It's also good to know your enemy.

My question is what is the enemy's mindset in regard to our footing? Here are a couple of things that just came to mind in study. If I was the devil, I would knock you down and I would convince you that you were a failure and that you will always be a failure. Y'all ever heard that circulate through you mind? Ted started off this series by establishing that Satan is a liar. He's a deceiver. I tell my kids he's a trickster. He's trying to trick you into his hands. One of the lies that he'll speak into the life of a believer is he'll minimize you. When you make mistakes... And, yes, you will. He'll try to bury you in your own failures.

But here's how we approach that. We take our stand. You see, the gospel puts you back up on your feet. If there is anybody laying in the dust right now, the reason you're here is to hear this. The gospel will put you back up on your feet this morning. Your gospel restoration looks like this. 2 Corinthians 5: 17 – ***Therefore if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold new things have come.***

That was the picture that we just had during baptism. The old way of life is dead to me now. I am alive in Christ. Behold, I'm a new creation and there is new life that is waiting for me.

Here's another one. Philippians 3: 14... This is Paul. ***I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, all who are mature, let's have this attitude...*** In other words, he's like I'm forgetting what lies behind and I press on towards what's ahead. ***...and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that to you as well.***

Here's another lie from the devil. If I were the devil, I would convince you that the best you can do is to manage your sin. This is one of the greatest deceptions in all human history. The lie is that victory in Jesus is this lofty, unattainable idea. That you can't experience true victory. That the best that you can have in this Christian life is just to manage your sin, to spread out your mistakes, to put a little bit more time behind you before the next time you fall.

That is not what the gospel preaches. And that's not why Jesus died. Here's what the scripture says, We stand our ground. The gospel empowers you to claim victory over sin, death, and the devil himself.

John 8: 31- 32 – **31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** That word *free*, in the Greek, specifically means freedom from sin. Make no mistake about it.

Then in 1 Corinthians 15: 55-58 – **"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**

And I will also add this: James 4 says, **Resist the devil and he'll flee from you.** I want to be oh so clear that Satan is the greatest super villain in all of human history. He is smarter than you, he is wiser than you, he is more powerful than you. But when you are in Christ, a six-year-old can take his or her stand and say, "Satan, be gone," and guess what he'll do. He runs. That is the power of the gospel and Satan doesn't want you to lean into that and stand upon it.

Finally, if I was the devil, I'd cause you to doubt that God cares enough about you to help you in your insignificance. *You're just one in eight billion, how could he really care? Deal with it on your own.* The truth is we're charged to stand firm. The gospel gives you confidence when the enemy attacks.

Your gospel identity is this. 1 Peter 2: 9 is one of my favorite passages. I think about it all the time. **You are a chosen people a royal priesthood... I'm speaking this over this church right now. ... a holy nation, a people for God's own possession so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.** Stand firm in it.

Let me close this way. This summer, I made a decision in my prayer life. I'm going to make a significant change. I have made a significant change in the way that I pray. The circumstances were the summer caught me off guard. The summer of ministry came up against serious hardship. Another round of coronavirus, multiple rounds of attacks, weariness, just frankly being worn down. Before this all played out, early this spring, I was praying that God would take me on an adventure with him. Have you ever read a good book that doesn't have any hardship in it? I don't know of one. I want adventure with God more than I want comfort. I'm done praying for blue skies. From here on out, I'm praying, "Lord, help me to stand my ground. Help me to take my stand. Help me to stand firm. Help me to be unsurprised when the enemy pushes back."

Peter said it this way, "Beloved, don't be surprised by the fiery trial you find yourself in." We live in a broken world and it's going to come. I pray that this body right here is no longer caught off guard. That each day we wake up, strap on our sandals, stand ready, and the gospel of peace is our foundation so that when the hardship comes, we'll stand our ground with a clear mind, with a clear purpose, ready.

So, I charge you, don't get ready, stay ready.

I'm going to pray. And in advance, I'd just love to invite anybody who needs some prayer to come down. We had a gal that grabbed Travis and me earlier today. She has some medical news that is pretty scary, and on Tuesday, she finds out whether or not she has cancer. I applaud her for her vulnerability because now, our church can come around her and support her. I just want to invite you, as you are walking through hardship, we want to get in the huddle with you. Come see our prayer team when we're done; we'd love to process life and see how we can support you and pray for you.

Father, we come to you. We have happy hearts for all of those that chose to be baptized today, make a public profession of their faith. We rejoice with them, God, and we pray strength underneath them. I want to pray, God, that this body of Christ would stand more firmly in the gospel of peace walking out of here than when we walked in. We pray that we wouldn't be caught off guard, Lord, but that we would stand firm.

It's in Jesus name we pray... Amen