

BOOTS OF PEACE, ACTS 16:16-39

Spiritual Warfare #3

◆Intro: In our text for today we read of peace in the middle of a prison as inmates Paul and Silas, sing and experience a violent shaking of the earth. Let me tell you another like it. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor killed under Hitler's reign of terror, spent the last year of his life in a Nazi prison during WW2. One night he and the other prisoners were herded together as Allied bombs fell. Fabian Von Schlaberndorff writes, "Tightly squeezed together we were standing in our air raid shelter when a bomb hit with an enormous explosion. For a second it seemed the shelter were bursting and the ceiling crashing down on top of us. It rocked like a ship tossing in the storm, but it held. At that moment Dietrich Bonhoeffer showed his mettle. He remained quite calm, he did not move a muscle, but stood motionless and relaxed as if nothing had happened." You might say Bonhoeffer was a man at peace whether facing life or death.

◆Or think of the young school teacher in an Oklahoma tornado who gathered her class in a small interior closet and in the most frightening moments kept telling the children "It's almost over; it's almost over." Then there's the teacher during the Newtown, CT, school shootings who kept saying to her children -also in a closet- "I love everyone one of you; I love every on of you." Later she told a reporter "If those children were going to die, I didn't want it to happen without them hearing that someone loved them." People at peace bring peace to others around them.

◆Are you a person at peace? How far does your faith go? Does it go with you behind the hospital door? Does it go with you into bankrupt retirement accounts? Does it go with you into next year's tuition bill? Does your faith say with Job, "Even if he kills me I will trust in him."? Does your faith go

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with you into the frozen river where your child has fallen? Does it accompany you into a rip tide? Are you free to jump in front of a buss to push another out of the way? Are you a person at peace?

◆ Quick reminder: in this series we are looking at the task of fighting sin, evil, wrong, and ugliness that sucks from us the life blood of joy, peace and blessing. Is there anything we can do to arm ourselves for this spiritual war? Ephesians 6 lists armor we can wear. Now, remember for a committed follower of Jesus, God’s love is not in question when we fail, or suffer. And our destiny is secure. But we are in a battle in this life and the degree to which we live with God’s power and daily victory depends in part on our cooperation with God. Paul encouraged us to put on the Belt of Truth, the Breast Plate of Righteousness, and now the Boots of Peace.

◆ **1. What are the Boots of Peace?** Though boots, or shoes are not actually mentioned by Paul, he clearly refers to them. Like the Roman soldier’s studded sandals of Paul’s day that offered grip on the turf, Paul urges us to gain grip and steadiness in battle with the Gospel of Peace. Somehow the good news of peace is a foil to satan and evil. Read this:

◆ *“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” Romans 16:20, NLT.*

◆ Again we find feet and peace related! What is this peace that steadies the feet of the soul in the face of evil?

◆ A. Well one option is that the Boots of Good news of Peace is the practicing of witnessing. Evangelism comes from the term evangelos or “good news”. In this interpretation we conclude that witnessing to the truth of God tears the heart out of Satan’s empire. In the Book of Revelation

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where the saints do battle with the great dragon (Satan) it says, “They overcame by the blood and the word of their testimony.” So there seems to be a sense in which Boots of Peace represent the readiness to go and share the gospel message of salvation through Jesus. And this would surely seem a weapon against evil in our world, wouldn’t it? If we were making Christians out of gangs, and Christians out of drug pushers, and Christians out of politicians, our cities would be that much safer, for the way of Christ is not the way of the terrorist. The way of Christ is peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal.5).

◆ And that is the task of the Church on Earth, is it not? To spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ’s Church does not force conversion at gun point. It offers forgiveness and the promise of eternal life through Jesus’ one sacrifice of himself! In fact, we spread the Gospel most when we are willing to suffer and absorb evil like Christ did. Down through history the Church has always grown most during persecution because the reality of God is seen in those who return good for evil instead of evil for evil.

◆ So the Boots of the Gospel of Peace could refer to a steadiness that comes from sharing our faith.

◆ B. Option #2 is that the Boots of the Gospel of Peace refer to the steadiness we have in the face of danger and evil because we at peace with God through Christ. In other words, our final salvation sustains us in the battles with temporary pain or temptation. This is also a biblical truth. In this case the “readiness” is not so much a readiness to go with the Gospel

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as a readiness that comes from the Gospel. The NIV favors this interpretation and it certainly fits the context:

◆v11 urges us to “take our stand against the devils schemes”

◆v13 wants us to “stand our ground”

◆v14 says to “stand firm then”

◆The Jewish historian Josephus writes that the Roman soldiers had shoes thickly studded with sharp nails for both grip and damage in a fight. This interpretation of the Boots of Peace tells us the peace we have with God defends us against spiritual attacks. What does that look like?

◆2. Wearing the Boots

◆A. I suggest we take both interpretations as valid and helpful. Lets talk about defending ourselves with the reminder of our peace with God, from the lies of the evil one that get dropped in our heads.

◆Lets say Satan leaps at you with “What if you don’t get the perfect job?” Because you belong to Jesus and are at peace with God through all eternity, you counter, “Life is bigger than my job. I belong to the True God. He will direct my path no matter where I am.”

◆Lets say Satan shoots a thought into your mind, “What if you don’t have enough money when you want to retire? Better be a workaholic. Better be anxious and worry a lot. Better buy more insurance.” But because you are a committed believer in Jesus by far the greater length of your life will be in the perfection of heaven, so you don’t have to live like hell here. (I’m not swearing. I mean that quite literally.) So you counter, “Wait a minute. God made the stars and the planets. The mountains are his. The valleys are his. The

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streams are his. My money is his. I am his. God will provide. Get behind me satan.”

◆ So our peace comes as we count the truth of our faith. This I think is what the great Hall of Faith people in Hebrews 11 did. Remember? Hebrews 11 recounts name after name of people living desperately on this planet but mightily because they aimed at another world.

◆ *“All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.” Hebrews 11:13-16, NIV.*

◆ It is the power of faith in the Gospel of Peace, the promises of God that enables saints to live holy lives in suffering. Some times we get miracles and delivery.

◆ *“who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again.” Hebrews 11:33-35, NIV.*

◆ Often we experience tragedy and loss in this world.

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- ◆ Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawn in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and ill-treated-- the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.” Hebrews 11:35-39, NIV.
- ◆ Which list would your life be in? For some tragedy is their proof that there is no God. They live a life of trepidation, fear and disappointment. For others tragedy is proving that there is a God by the peace they maintain in the face of it.
- ◆ B. In a second way, the other option for the Boots is also true enough. Peace also comes as we recount the gospel to others, or witness. Some people are Christ followers but never say a thing about him in their world. Little wonder that they can't seem to feel God much. They have so little interaction with God.
- ◆ C. Lets sum things up into a few short concepts for wearing the Boots of Peace.
 - ◆ 1) Make your peace with God. If you have not committed your heart to Jesus Christ as savior for all eternity, do it now when we pray! You want to settle your destiny before you get there.
 - ◆ *“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified*

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through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” Romans 4:25; 5:1, NIV.

◆ It is not without reason that the angels sang of “good news” and “peace on earth among men” when Jesus was born.

◆ 2) Make time to worship God. Simply, worship is recounting, recognizing God’s graces. You can do that in a prayer, in song, with others in a gathering like this one. *But notice the connection of peace with the prayer:*

◆ *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:4-7, NIV.*

◆ 3) Practice godly behavior. It’s not rocket science. When we sin, it is the nature of the soul to be unsettled.

◆ *“But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”” Isaiah 57:20, 21, NIV.*

◆ On the other hand...

◆ “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or

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heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:8, 9, NIV.

◆4. Practice telling the Gospel. I don't mean you need a soap box and a bull horn at the next Cubs game. Tell someone an answer to prayer. Tell someone something God showed you or told you. Tell someone when the weekend comes up why you like to go to worship, how your week is different when you get right with God again.

◆*“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!””*
Isaiah 52:7, NIV.

◆**Conclusion:** In the film “First Knight” Sir Lancelot (Richard Gear) becomes one of the knights of the Round Table. He is distinguished quickly as a skilled swordsman. At one point he is asked what the secret to his incredible ability with the blade is, and if he would teach it. He replies that you must be good with the sword, but there is something else that cannot be taught. You either have it or you don't. What is it? You must not care whether you live or die.

◆Any soldier who thinks most about preserving his on life and happiness will eventually be afraid, and then weakened. According to the Bible the forgiveness of sin, the promise of eternal salvation will give you peace whether you live or die.

◆“If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason,

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Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.” Romans 14:8, 9, NIV.

◆ Lets return to the story we read at the beginning today. Can you relate to their experience in Acts 16?

◆ in spite of the fact that the fortune telling girl told the truth about them! 17-18

◆ In spite of doing a good thing, casting out a demon; 18

◆ in spite of racial prejudice (v19, Luke and Timothy were both there but not seized.)

◆ in spite of being beaten (v22-23)

◆ in spite of being in the inner cell and in stocks...THEY ARE SINGING TO GOD.

◆ How can they do that? Because they know Christ. They know they are saved. They know they will live billions of years. They know God is bigger than someone dying. Get your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.