

## Ephesians 6:15

### Introduction

This section on the armor of the Lord in Ephesians six is Paul's final application of everything he's already said. Paul reaches back to the first five and a half chapters and mines it now for this final exhortation to "stand against the schemes of the devil," to "withstand in the evil day," and "to stand." "Stand, therefore," he says, "having girded your waist with TRUTH, and having put on the breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS."

The truth is that unshakable, solid foundation upon which all of our thinking, and speaking, and living is based. The truth is the whole will of God throughout all of Scripture that's fully and finally summed up and revealed to us in Jesus (Eph. 1:13; 4:20-21; 4:15, 25; 4:24; 5:9). It's of the utmost importance that we be steeped, and grounded in truth. The truth guards us against Satan's lies and keeps us from being double minded in all our ways.

Righteousness is the way we live when we're living in obedience to the truth. Christianity is about doing – the doing not of being good, but the doing of righteousness. Righteousness calls us to a far higher standard than that of "being good," and yet the irony is that righteousness is attainable while "being good" is ultimately impossible. Righteousness guards us against the burden of legalism and guilt and despair, the opiate of complacency and lethargy (straddling the fence), and the deadly poison of pride and self-congratulation. Righteousness fortifies us with humility and a wonderful, joyful confidence.

"Stand, therefore, having girded your waist with TRUTH, and having put on the breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS..."

### I. "and having shod your feet with the preparedness of the gospel of peace"

So what does this mean? What is this third piece of armor that's so desperately essential for the intense struggle in which we're all engaged? What do you think?

The first question we really need to ask is, "What's the meaning of the word, 'of'?" Usually, I don't ask crazy questions like that on Sunday mornings. I ask it during the week, and I just assume the answer on Sunday morning. But this week, we're dealing with a verse that might appear *at first* to mean something very different than what I believe it really does mean. So I want to take just a second and let you come on a part of the journey that I'm usually on during the week. And I'll try to make it fun and interesting.

The Greek language is full of what we call in grammar, "genitives" – "of's" (as a general rule). That little word, "of," can do a whole lot *of* things.

- ✓ It can represent: "Crown *of* life" (Crown *that represents* life; James 1:12)
- ✓ It can possess: "Saul... a man *of* the tribe of Benjamin" (a man *belonging to* the tribe of Benjamin; Acts 13:21)
- ✓ It can describe – "Words *of* grace" (words *that are* gracious; Luke 4:22)

- ✓ It can say what's inside – “The disciples [were] dragging the net full *of* fish” (the disciples were dragging the net full *with* fish; John 21:8)
- ✓ It can tell us what someone is the object of – “The love *of* God” (*our* love *for* God; 1 John 5:3)
- ✓ It can tell us what someone is the subject of – “The love *of* God” (*God's* love *for* us; Rom. 5:5)
- ✓ And it can do many more things than these!

“Of” (which we call a genitive) can do a whole lot *of* things. Ephesians is full *of* genitives – sometimes one right after another. Consider this woodenly literal translation *of* Ephesians 1:17-19.

“[I pray] that the God *OF* the Lord *OF* us, Jesus Christ, the Father *OF* glory, may give you the Spirit *OF* wisdom and *OF* revelation in the knowledge *OF* Him (the eyes *OF* the hearts *OF* you being [already] enlightened), that you may know what is the hope *OF* the calling *OF* Him, what are the riches *OF* the glory *OF* the inheritance *OF* Him in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness *OF* the power *OF* Him toward us who believe, according to the powerful working *OF* the strength *OF* the might *OF* Him.”

I'm glad God gave us “of's.” I'm so grateful that God gave us *words* to communicate His eternal and everlasting truth! In the translation of Ephesians posted on our website, I've translated a lot *of* the genitives with “of” so you can spend time thinking about what exactly the “of's” are doing. Now here in Ephesians 6:15, we have two more genitives – two more “of's” – “and having shod your feet with the preparedness *of* the gospel *of* peace.” The *key* to understanding this verse is understanding what the genitives are up to. What are the “of's” doing?

So what do you think the “Gospel *of* peace” means? Is it “The Gospel *that is* peaceful?” Probably not. “The Gospel *that gives* peace?”

- ✓ Ephesians 6:15 (NLT) — For shoes, put on the peace *that comes from* the Good News.

Or what about, “the Gospel that is peace” – the Gospel *whose message is* peace? Based on everything we've seen in Ephesians, that's the right answer. What *is* the good news? It's the good news *of* peace – that we *have peace* with God and therefore we're also *at peace* with God's people.

But now what's the other genitive doing – “having shod your feet with the preparedness *of* the Gospel of peace? What do you think? Is this the preparedness *that gives* the Gospel of peace (objective genitive)?

- ✓ Ephesians 6:15 (NRSV; cf. Louw & Nida; O'Brien) — As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.

It's hard for me to believe that's what the "of" is up to here. That would be a really sneaky "of."\* So then, is this the preparedness *that comes from* the Gospel of peace?†

- ✓ Ephesians 6:15 (ESV; cf. NET) — as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness *given by* the gospel of peace.
- ✓ Ephesians 6:15 (NIV) — with your feet fitted with the readiness *that comes from* the gospel of peace.

Can you see the difference now? In other words, is this the preparedness of being ready to share the Gospel and evangelize others (which is very important), or is this the preparedness to stand firm in our intense struggle against Satan – a preparedness that comes from knowing in our own hearts the good news of peace?

- ✓ Ephesians 6:15 (NCV; cf. NLT) — On your feet wear the Good News of peace *to help you stand strong [in the intense struggle]*.

This is the meaning that I believe makes the most sense (along with most others).‡ So now let's go back and put it all together. Just like with TRUTH, and just like with RIGHTEOUSNESS, Paul has also spoken over, and over again in Ephesians about the GOSPEL OF PEACE. The whole "Good News" that Paul has been proclaiming throughout this letter (from beginning to end) can be summed up as the Gospel of PEACE. Remember that the mystery of God's will is to *unite and bring together* all things in Christ (1:10). And so the good news of the Gospel is that God has taken us who were His enemies and made us His friends in Christ. God has taken us who were cut off from His people, and made us fellow members of the body in Christ. Think about this: We are fully, and completely, in every way that could possibly matter, at peace. I didn't say that we *feel peaceful*. I said that we are *at peace*. And I only say this because it's what God has said to us in His Word. Here we see our peace with God *and* with His people:

- ✓ Ephesians 2:14-17 (cf. 1:3) — For he himself *is* our *peace*, who *has* made both things one, and *has* broken down the dividing wall of partition... that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making *peace*, and might reconcile them *both in one body to God* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and *preached peace* to you who were far off and *peace* to those who were near...

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\* As O'Brien points out, this interpretation of the genitive would require that "gospel in the original is a noun of agency signifying 'to proclaim or share the gospel [of peace]', a force which it has in more than half of its sixty other occurrences in Paul." Even so, it still seems awkward to speak of the "preparedness of the preached Gospel of peace." Once again, that would be a very sneaky "of." It would have been so much easier for Paul to say, "having shod your feet with the *proclamation* of the Gospel of peace." (cf. Hoehner) Then the "of" would be indisputably an objective genitive. But, of course, that's not what Paul said! In light of this, the *context* seems to be very decisively in favor of a reference to preparedness *for battle and struggle* so that one may be sure to *stand strong*. (O'Brien also cites Isaiah 52:7 as support for his view, but on that subject, see below.)

† A third option favored by the HCSB (cf. BAGD) seems rather ambiguous to me: "...and your feet sandaled with readiness *for* the gospel of peace." Perhaps this also assumes that "Gospel" is a noun of agency – "your feet sandaled with readiness for the *preaching* of peace"? But then why not just say that? Why not use the verb form for the proclamation of the Gospel? Additionally, "for" seems an awkward translation of the genitive. Why not just use the Greek preposition "pros" ("for"; cf. Titus 3:1)? It seems to me that the problem with these views is they have to work too hard in order to be convincing.

‡ cf. Lincoln, Thielman, Hoehner, Hodge, Hendriksen, Braune

This next verse emphasizes our peace with God’s people:

- ✓ Ephesians 3:6 (cf. 1:13) — The Gentiles *are fellow [syn] heirs, and fellow [syn] members of the body, and fellow [syn] partakers* of the promise in Christ Jesus through the *gospel*...

Earlier, Paul spent time emphasizing the peace that we have with God. After pointing out that we were born into this world children of God’s wrath by nature (2:3), Paul says:

- ✓ Ephesians 2:4-6 — But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive *together with [syn] Christ*—by grace you are saved!—and raised us up *together with [syn] Him* and seated us *together with [syn] Him* in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The good news of the Gospel – the good news of Ephesians – is that we are *at peace* with the holy God and Creator of the universe. At one time that wasn’t true. We were children of His wrath. But now it *is* true. We are His beloved sons and daughters (cf. 1:5-6). So Paul says in Romans:

- ✓ Romans 5:1, 11 — Therefore, *having been* justified by faith, we *have peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ... we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we *have now received the reconciliation*.
- ✓ Colossians 1:19–22 — For in [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to *reconcile to himself* all things, whether on earth or in heaven, *making peace* by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now *reconciled* in his body of flesh by his death.

PEACE. That’s the wonderful message and content of the Gospel. It’s a fact. It’s something already accomplished. It’s a present reality. There has been the complete cessation of all hostilities, and now God is in every way and at every moment “*for us*” (cf. Rom. 8:31-32; Num. 23:22; 24:8). And it’s this wonderful reality that gives us the sure footing that we need to stand strong.

If I *know* that I’m at peace with God, and that He is “for me” in everything, and at all times, then I can truly be “*prepared*” for anything and everything. We can’t underestimate the power of this wonderful truth.

“As the gospel secures our peace with God and gives the assurance of his favor, it produces that joyful alacrity of mind which is essential to success in the spiritual conflict.” (Hodge)

Think about this description of the boots worn by a Roman soldier:

“The Roman legionaries wore heavy sandals (a low half-boot) with soles made of several layers of leather averaging ¾ inch thick, and equipped with hollow-headed metal studs that provided a firm grip on the soil. They were tied by leather straps half-way up the

shin. These were not running sandals but ones able to dig in and stand against the enemy.” (Hoehner and Thielman)

The objective peace that we *have* with God and with all of God’s people brings a wonderful subjective, inner experience of peace in the midst of any and every circumstance. The objective peace that we *have* enables us to experientially “dig in” and be prepared in every way (spiritually, mentally, and emotionally) to stand. But when do we take the time just to meditate on the reality of God’s unceasing favor upon us, and our fellowship and participation in His redeemed people? When we *know* we’re at peace with God and at peace with each other, then we can *be* at peace even in the midst of Satan’s attacks. When we *know* we’re at peace with God and joined with God’s people, then we can truly *be* at peace even as we face the reality of the intense struggle ahead. So it’s the Gospel of peace that truly gives us the “readiness,” the calmness, and the presence of mind, to do battle. It’s the Gospel of peace that keeps us sane in the fight.

“A person who experiences within his own heart the peace of God that passes all understanding, the very peace which the gospel proclaims, has been delivered of a great burden. The conviction of being reconciled with God through the blood of Christ gives him the courage and the zeal to fight the good fight.” (Hendriksen)

O, how wonderful and beautiful is this truth! How strengthened and fortified we will be if we can take hold of this truth and meditate upon it day by day. If we are truly *at peace* with God and *at peace* with God’s people (not through anything we have done, but through simple faith in Jesus and what He has done), and if this peace is truly an accomplished and permanent reality, then we already have *all that matters*. Now we can be ready for the conflict ahead – for the struggle that lies before us – *without any fear*. Isn’t battle very easily and very naturally associated with fear? But not for us – not in the battle that we fight – *even though* the stakes are higher and the foe more deadly in this battle than in any other. There is a godly trembling as every Christian faces this “intense struggle,” yes, but not the paralysis or the paranoia of fear. This is not God’s will for us. This is not God’s will for you. God’s will for us is the preparedness (the security and tranquility and fortitude) that comes from having shod our feet with the Gospel—the good news—of PEACE.

So now we can say that the Gospel that *is* our PEACE is also, for this very reason, the Gospel that *gives* us PEACE! Peace in the midst of intense struggle. Peace in those times of confession and repentance. Peace in the midst of pain and suffering. Peace in the midst of trials of all kinds. Peace in everything and at all times.

Just as the girding of the loins with TRUTH, and the putting on of the breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS both use language borrowed from Isaiah, so does this shodding of our FEET with the preparedness of the GOSPEL of PEACE. The prophet writes in Isaiah 52:

- ✓ Isaiah 52:7 — How beautiful upon the mountains are the *feet* of him who brings *good news*, who publishes *peace*, who brings good news of *happiness*, who publishes *salvation*, who says to Zion, “*Your God reigns.*”

In Isaiah, we have a messenger whose feet “spring over the mountains with all the swiftness of gazelles.” (Keil & Delitzsch) Another commentator pictures the messenger “not so much running as dancing.” (Oswalt) It’s hard to picture a Roman soldier decked out in full military gear doing that. Paul takes the language and themes of Isaiah, and transfers it from the context of a messenger running swiftly over the mountains after the battle is over to that of a soldier digging in and bracing himself for battle to come (cf. Thielman). The messenger in Isaiah announced the good news of peace to the people of God who waited in the besieged city. But now Paul pictures us as soldiers, joyful and secure in the knowledge of this same peace that’s been announced to us, and therefore prepared and ready to stand firm in the intense struggle that remains. I love how John Oswalt helps us to see the imagery of Isaiah:

“The reality of what God is about to do bursts in on the hearers, and they are called on to celebrate the glory and the joy of it. As wonderful as creation was, and as true as divine providence is, it is redemption that is earth’s great song. For without redemption, creation and providence are ultimately abortive. The world is caught in the bondage of sin and destruction; creation is fatally marred and providence makes the bondage only bearable. But if it is possible to be delivered from human sin and its effects, then creation may yet see its children and providence may yet lead us to the Father’s house. That is cause for joy. All that needs to be said about redemption has now been said... [God’s] power to accomplish his purposes through the humility of his Servant has been announced. Thus, helpless, besieged Israel, and the world, wait. Has God won the final victory... have we been redeemed from that bondage which has held us captive [in sin]? How shall [Isaiah] pronounce that resounding ‘yes’ that God’s great work demands? He pictures a besieged city breathlessly awaiting the news of the outcome of a decisive conflict. If the news is victory, they are delivered; if the news is defeat, all is lost. Suddenly, on a distant hill a runner is seen. What is the news? As he comes nearer it can be seen that he is waving a victory palm and not so much running as dancing. The Lord has won! Let the singing begin!” (Oswalt)

And now it’s even so for the Christian soldier who can stand in the battle even with singing – because he has shod his feet in the preparedness that comes from the Gospel of PEACE. That’s why we need this Gospel of PEACE constantly proclaimed to us (cf. Acts 10:36; Rom. 10:15). That’s why we need to be always seeing and hearing what the Prophet Isaiah described so long ago, and then always being joyfully moved to respond even as he responded:

- ✓ Isaiah 52:7 — How beautiful upon the mountains are the *feet* of him who brings *good news*, who publishes *peace*, who brings good news of *happiness*, who publishes *salvation*, who says to Zion, “*Your God reigns.*”

And so we are not afraid. We are not paranoid, or paralyzed with fear. Come what may, this is God’s will for you and me in the battle: The total preparedness (the security, and tranquility, and fortitude, and joy) that comes from having shod our feet with the GOOD NEWS of PEACE. The GOOD NEWS that we who were once God’s enemies are now at peace with Him in Christ Jesus. He is always and in every way for us. The GOOD NEWS that we who were once cut off from God’s people, and hostile to God’s people, are now *fellow heirs*, and *fellow members of the body*, and *fellow partakers* of the promise in Christ Jesus. It is *this* good news of peace that gives us the

preparedness to stand strong in the battle every single day of our lives. Listen now to these words of Jesus Himself, who is our peace, and who proclaims peace to us:

- ✓ John 16:33 — I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.
- ✓ John 14:27 — Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

“Stand, therefore,” brothers and sisters, “having girded your waist with **TRUTH**, and having put on the breastplate of **RIGHTEOUSNESS**, and having shod your feet with the preparedness of the **GOSPEL OF PEACE**.”