

On July 21 1861... (very early in the days of the American Civil War)... poorly trained and (yet) overconfident... raw Yankee troops marched boldly toward the Confederate Army (which was camped at Bull Run... about 30 miles Southwest of Washington.) The arrogant Union soldiers acted as if they were headed to a sporting event to face a strictly underdog opponent.

Because it was so close to Washington... and thinking it would be a cakewalk for the Union troops... congressmen... high society ladies... and many spectators gathered on nearby hills to watch the skirmish. Most brought picnic baskets and blankets to better enjoy the entertainment.

But what they observed... was not (*at all*) what they had expected. The Confederate soldiers (led by Tomas J. Jackson) stood their ground. Their commander (General Jackson) inspired them by standing tall on his horse in harm's way the whole time... giving him the name (thereafter) – “*Stonewall Jackson.*”

The Confederates held out long enough for reinforcements of men and supplies to arrive from the South. The resolve and strengthened forces threw the Union Army into a *panic*. They seemed to forget that the Union Army *still* had more men and supplies than the South did.

The spectators on the hills (who had come to watch their team's certain victory) were flabbergasted (as you could imagine) when they saw the Union Army run away screaming... breaking ranks... and bumping in to one another (like keystone cops) in their efforts to flee for their lives.

In the words (that were later written by a journalist who had gathered with the spectators):

“We called to them. We tried to tell them that there was no danger. We called them to stop, implored them to stand. We denounced them in the most offensive terms; but all in vain. A cruel, crazy, mad, hopeless panic possessed them.”

I think that this “tid-bit” from our American history serves as a perfect example for what our passage in Ephesians (today) tries to keep you and I from doing – running away in spiritual warfare in panic. ... We all know that we are prone to behave like the Union Army in the first Battle of Bull Run. ... Our battle often gets ugly... disappointing circumstances strike us unexpectedly... we lose something of tremendous value... failure looks like a strong possibility – and we know others are watching. Suddenly we panic. We take our eyes off the truth of our overwhelming resources. None of that matters. Possible loss looms heavy on our horizon... and it's temporary pain is all that matters.

We are in Ephesians chapter six (a chapter that is famously known for its verses about spiritual warfare.) We have already seen how strong and formidable our enemy is... and that we are at war against powerful demonic forces in the world and in the heavens. Last week we looked at the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness – as tools that we need to keep on ourselves – to be victorious.

Today we will see what we need to put on... so that fear and panic will not overwhelm us emotionally... and make us turn our backs and flee (like a Union Soldier at Bull Run.) God (knowing that we have a tendency for this) has given us a critical tool for stopping a “mad... hopeless... panic” in the heat of battle.

Some Christians may not think that they (really) need this protection. ... Do you remember Peter on Jesus' final night with His disciples...? “Lord – I

won't desert You. The OTHERS might – but not ME! I will die for You..."

But Peter... in the heat of the battle denied Jesus three times. ... Peter thought that he had enough strength in himself. He didn't... and neither do you and I.

Moses is another example of allowing panic to change his resolute obedience to God. Moses became inflamed with wrath... because the Israelites kept rebelling and wanting to return to Egypt. ... At one point Moses became so infuriated with the... that he acted very foolishly. You can read about this incident in Numbers 20... and see how it provoked God to exclude Moses from entering the Promised Land.

Let me give some (*more modern*) examples... to further establish our great need for this piece of armor that we come to today. It is vital that we dial into this great *means*... that is available to every believer in our spiritual battles. The testimony of MANY well-known believers have (*at one time*) behaved like a Union Soldier at the first Battle of Bull Run.

C.S. Lewis (the famed author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and a prominent Christian apologist) faced significant discouragement after the death of his wife... Joy Davidman. ... Lewis grappled with deep grief and questioned the goodness of God in the face of suffering. ... He expressed his struggles candidly in his book *A Grief Observed*... where he documented his feelings of despair and loss... reflecting on how even a strong faith could be shaken by personal tragedy.

Mother Teresa... known for her selfless service to the poor... revealed in her later years a struggle with doubt and feelings of abandonment by God. In her private writings... which were published after her death... she

expressed periods of *profound* **darkness** and spiritual **desolation**. Despite her unwavering commitment to serving others... she battled with the silence of God... which led her to question the very faith she dedicated her life to.

Martin Luther (a key figure in the Protestant Reformation) faced immense discouragement during his quest for reform. He dealt with feelings of despair and doubt *about his own salvation* and the state of the Church. His struggle with faith is famously depicted in his doctrine of justification by faith... which was partly born out of his own experiences with spiritual anxiety. Luther's challenges ultimately led him to greater theological insights that transformed Christianity.

If you were a believer and around in the 1970's... the name David Wilkerson may be familiar to you. David Wilkerson... founder of Teen Challenge and author of *The Cross and the Switchblade*... experienced deep discouragement during his ministry... especially during times when his efforts seemed to yield little fruit. He faced opposition and skepticism from both his community and the broader church. His perseverance in faith... even amidst these trials... inspired many... and he often spoke about how discouragement strengthened his reliance on God.

Billy Graham (one of the most influential evangelists of the 20th century) also encountered moments of doubt. Early in his ministry... he experienced a crisis of faith while studying the Bible and wrestling with the concept of inspiration. This struggle led him to a pivotal moment of surrender... where he chose to trust in God's Word despite his uncertainties. Graham often recounted this experience as formative in his faith journey and ministry.

This is such a small sampling of warriors of the Christian Faith... who faced panic-issues in their spiritual warfare. The fact that we admire each of these Christian leaders OUGHT to motivate all of us to pray for all the Christian leaders who are having a strong Spiritual impact on your life. (They have their own stories... you can be sure!)

Standing firm is something you and I need to prepare for. (If we don't prepare ourselves... or think that panic won't ever happen to us... we are extremely vulnerable.) ... A Christian's sense of inner peace can be disrupted by various factors... many of which are influenced by both external circumstances and internal struggles. Here are some common disturbances (which someone who is listening to me right now might be facing):

1. Doubt and Uncertainty -Doubts about faith, God's promises, or personal worthiness can lead to anxiety and unrest. Questions about the validity of beliefs or experiences can create a sense of disconnection from God and disrupt inner peace.

2. Grief and Loss -The experience of loss—whether through death, separation, or other significant changes—can profoundly affect emotional well-being. Grief can cloud one's ability to feel peace, prompting feelings of sadness, anger, or confusion.

3. Fear and Anxiety -Concerns about the future, health, finances, or personal safety can create a pervasive sense of unrest. Fear of the unknown can overshadow faith and lead to feelings of helplessness.

4. Guilt and Shame -Past mistakes or perceived failures can weigh heavily on a person's conscience. Guilt and shame can hinder the ability to feel forgiven and accepted, disrupting a Christian's inner peace.

5. Conflicts and Relationships -Strained relationships, whether within families, friendships, or congregations, can lead to emotional turmoil. Conflict often distances individuals from a sense of community and support, affecting emotional stability.

6. Distractions and Busyness -The demands of modern life—work, family obligations, and social commitments—can lead to a chaotic lifestyle. An overloaded schedule can prevent individuals from quiet reflection and communion with God, disrupting peace.

7. Spiritual Warfare - Many Christians believe in the reality of spiritual warfare, viewing doubts, temptations, and discouragement as attacks from negative spiritual forces. The struggle against sin and spiritual challenges can create inner turmoil.

8. Cultural Pressures - Living in a society that often conflicts with Christian values can lead to feelings of isolation or compromise. Critics of faith and moral standards can cause anxiety and conflict when navigating personal beliefs in a pluralistic culture.

9. Health Issues - Physical health problems, chronic pain, or mental health challenges can significantly impact emotional well-being. Health challenges can lead to despair and a sense of being disconnected from God's care.

10. Lack of Spiritual Disciplines - Neglecting spiritual practices such as prayer, scripture reading, and worship can lead to diminished connection

with God. Without these practices, individuals may feel spiritually dry and disconnected, affecting their peace.

11. Comparison and Envy - Feeling inadequate or envious when comparing oneself to others—whether in terms of spiritual growth, material possessions, or life circumstances—can create inner conflict and discontent.

These disturbances highlight the fragility of inner peace amid the complexities of life that every believer faces. Christian you are at war. Horrific challenges are inevitable. ... But God has a provision for us in our next piece of spiritual armor.

Ephesians 6:15

The first thing that I want to make clear about this verse is very important. (You need to hear this.) You see many people make a wrong assumption and I think MISUNDERSTAND the point that Paul is (actually) making.

(LISTEN) - This verse does not speak of spreading the gospel. (Not directly... anyway.) ... Yes... you heard me right. Paul does not mention shoes that enable us to carry the gospel to other people. These shoes are not for making us **MOBILE** – but **IMOBILE**. They are for keeping us stationary – immovable! The PRIMARY use for these shoes is to make us STAND and keep fighting... instead of falling down and giving-up.

These verses (Ephesians 6:10-16) show the Christian standing (not advancing.) ... Our verse today is MORE about the believer's stability and surefootedness from the Gospel – because of the peace it gives him so he can stand in battle. ... Perhaps a case can be made that the spread of the

Gospel is also what Paul had in mind – but I see his PRIMARY emphasis is to keep us standing in situations where we might panic.

Shoes make an excellent metaphor for the means of standing strong. ... The image Paul has in mind comes from the Roman soldier's war boot... known as "the *caliga*" or half-boot (which the legionnaire regularly wore while on duty.) It was an open-toed leather boot with a heavily nail-studded sole which was tied to the ankles and shins with straps. These were not shoes for running — for example... either fleeing or pursuing an enemy. ... In fact... Josephus tells of a centurion who (because he was running after his enemies while wearing "shoes thickly studded with sharp nails") slipped and fell on his back on the stone pavement.

Their function was like today's cleated football shoe. They gave the foot traction and prevented sliding. Much ancient battle was hand-to-hand and foot-to-foot... like on the football line of scrimmage... so these boots gave the Roman soldier an advantage over ill-equipped foes. The "readiness" of our text pictures us being ready with our *caliga* firmly planted on solid ground. Thus established... the enemy is not going to be able to knock us down... or push us back.

The spiritual lesson here is perfectly clear. It is "the gospel of peace" — the peace that comes to us in and through the gospel and makes us immovable in battle. The Scriptures present two aspects of this peace.

First... it is peace with God. Romans 5:1 says... "*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" ... Life apart from Christ has no deep peace... and all people are aware of this cosmic discomfort to some degree. ... For some it

manifests itself in a general sense of alienation. ... With others it is a raging awareness that their life is not right. ... Some pursue peace with passive desperation... longing for it to somehow come. ... They may go wild in pursuit of it... hoping it will come through money or sex or the accumulation of knowledge or religious exploration — but all they ever find is temporary relief. ... Peace is an ever-receding mirage.

But when a person finds peace with God through Christ... it is inexpressibly wonderful. ... Knowing that one's sins are forgiven and forgotten through Jesus Christ is the greatest knowledge anyone can have. (Can you think of ANYTHING that is better...?) The solid awareness that you are on the right terms with God is joyfully uplifting.

This is the point: when our feet are... (as the King James version puts it) “*shod*” or planted or covered in this peace... we can stand firm against the greatest assaults of the enemy. Each and every assault of the enemy can be overcome with a strong conviction that God REALLY is for us and His good will come out of this...

Second... (in addition to having peace with God)... there comes the peace of God. ... In the upper room on the final night of his earthly life Jesus told His disciples... and indeed all who follow Him: “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you*” (John 14:27). ... So... **He gives us His personal peace.** It was the peace He knew as he lay fast asleep in the boat amidst a storming sea (Matthew 8:23–27). ... It is the peace which so unnerved the fearful Pilate as he interrogated Christ (John 19:5–12). ... It is from God... and it is able to rise above the difficulties here on earth.

The word behind this is *shalom*: “completeness... soundness... welfare.” It means “well-being.” ... So... we can paraphrase Jesus’ words as: “*Peace and well-being I leave to you; my peace and my well-being I give to you.*”

Paul (also) refers to this in Philippians 4:7 when he says that “*the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*” ... His peace and well-being literally garrisons (as with a platoon of soldiers) the lives of faithful believers. His peace surpasses all understanding.

Those who first have peace *with* God... also receive the corollary - peace *of* God... girding our feet and making us powerful soldiers in the spiritual battle. No matter what the enemy throws at us... no matter what move the enemy makes... we are able to hold our ground. The Gospel of Peace is knowing that God is in control. ... Sometimes we simply need to look straight at whatever is threatening us to panic and burst into song: “*This world is not my home; I’m just a pass’n through...*” ... Only when we forget this... do we collapse in panic.

A common quip — “*the cobbler’s children have no shoes*” — expresses the irony of missing that which so surely ought to be ours because of our relationship and position. If we are Christians... we have peace *with* God because of the work of Christ. ... But the tragic irony is that many of us do not have the peace *of* God because we have pushed it away through rebellion and neglect. ... And as a result we are ever falling in battle. When the going gets rough... we panic. Sometimes we even bolt.

If this is so... we need to reopen the lines of communication and ask for his peace.

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

⁷ *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

... [P A U S E] ...

OK... Now I would like to bring up another application that I believe the Gospel of Peace has for every believer. (LISTEN!) Putting on the readiness of the Gospel of Peace – also means – that we must be ready to destroy all things in God’s church... which do not make for peace.

When we shod our feet with the Gospel of Peace... we are ready to kill things that destroy (or threatens to destroy)... the unity and peace of God in His church (among His family.) ... If you thought that the first application of these shoes was challenging... this one might be even MORE so... Few Christians pay attention to this second application that I will speak about next.

When you hear gossip... or someone slandering another believer (whether or not you think it might be true)... do you immediately put it to rest...? Have you ever rebuked a tale-bearer...?

Whenever you hear someone talking badly about a brother or sister in Christ (and you are neither part of the problem or the solution)... IF YOUR FEET ARE SHOD WITH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE... you will take immediate action to put it to rest. Gossip and slander are threats to peace among God’s people... and you need to take action to stop it. (And) don’t

buy into this bologna that “*I was only telling you so you can pray...*” (Hogwash!) Call it out. Stop it right there. Confront the gossiper. Say to him or her: “*Have you spoken directly to ‘so-n-so’ about this...? Do you think they would approve of you informing me about it in this way...?*” “*This seems like harmful gossip that has the potential of upsetting the peace of God...*”

Shod your feet with the gospel of peace ! ... Put to death slander and gossip. ... These divide ! ... They bring non-peace !

Because we have the peace with God (Rom. 5:1) that comes from the Gospel, we need not fear the attack of Satan or men. We must be at peace with God and with each other if we are to defeat the devil.

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James 4:1-7 (ESV)

¹ What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

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