

Take Your Stand
The Best Defense is a Good Offense
Ephesians 6:10-18

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Text Introduction: I am continuing a series this morning in Ephesians 6:10-18. First, we overviewed this passage and simply said that as Christians, we are in a battle. We are in a battle for our convictions, our culture, our children, and our churches. As a result, we are in a battle for our families and our future. We are called to take our stand in this battle. Actually, there are 3 main imperatives in this text: Be strengthened by the LORD, Put on the full armor of God, and stand.

Having given these three imperatives, Paul underscored 7 spiritual weapons that we should avail ourselves to as we carry out these imperatives. We are studying now each of these resources. To this point we have said that truth is the under armor. It is not the most important piece (they are all of equal importance), but it is the first piece. That is, it is the piece that serves as the undergirding of all the other pieces. Then, there is righteousness—the protector of the heart. Today, we consider the third resource—feet sandaled with the Gospel of peace. Let's read the whole text first.

Text: ¹⁰ Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. ¹² For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. ¹³ This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. ¹⁴ Stand, therefore,

with truth like a belt around your waist,
righteousness like armor on your chest,
¹⁵ and your feet sandaled with readiness
for the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In every situation take the shield of faith,
and with it you will be able to extinguish
all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation,
and the sword of the Spirit,
which is God's word.

¹⁸ Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.

Introduction: The best defense is a good offense. That's what a lot of coaches say. Or, is it the best offense is a good defense? I guess it depends on perspective. Last Sunday night, as the nation watched the Super Bowl, it certainly was that the best defense was a good offense. The Super Bowl pitted the NFL's best offense, the Denver Broncos, against the NFL's best defense, the Seattle Seahawks. On the game's first play after the opening the kick-off, points were scored—by the defense. The Seahawks defense continued to dominate throughout the game. When all was over, the Seahawks, known for their defense had scored 43 points to Denver's 8.

In the piece of armor that we consider today, I want to explore this idea that in our battle against the devil, we are not to just stand in a defensive position, but we are to go on the offensive with a readiness to share the gospel. In fact, if you remember one word today, I want it to be readiness. Verse 15 says, “And your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace.”

An Interpretive Problem

Now, first of all, we have something of an interpretive problem. If we are going to benefit from this piece of the armor, we have to know what Paul meant. If you were to read up on this phrase in different books on the New Testament, you will quickly discover that there is not uniformity in understanding. Some say that Paul was talking about our own salvation. These who favor this interpretation point to the defense of the armor. The shoes represent, they argue, the solid foundation of the knowledge of our salvation. My issue with this interpretation is that we get that a little later in this passage when he describes the helmet of salvation. In addition, immediately in verse 19-20, Paul’s attention turns to the advancement of the gospel through his own personal sharing.

Therefore, I take this phrase then to mean a readiness to share with others the gospel. “How is this a weapon?” someone might ask. How is this helping us in the battle against Satan? I go back to the title. Sometimes the best defense is to play offense. In this battle against Satan and all of his forces, our best defense at times is to get busy spreading the Gospel.

Take any hot-button issue of our times—abortion, the exclusivity of the Gospel. We can defend our position all we want, but we don’t make progress in these public debates. We will not win debate with people who come about these issues from a non-Christian, non-Biblical worldview. The debate is going to be won when hearts are changed. So, we stem the tide by gospel advancement. That must be our first priority. That must be the arena where our greatest battles are fought. That must be the arena where our greatest energies are spent. So, we get this picture of readiness in this scene.

A Picture of Readiness

The picture of readiness is shoes. If you like the movie, Forrest Gump, you might remember that Forrest said, “My mama always said you can tell a lot about a person by their shoes—where they’re going, where they’ve been.” Shoes do tell a lot about a person. You see someone with a certain pair of shoes, and immediately you think about a particular occupation or activity. The question of this text is about being ready to share the gospel.

I have a preacher friend in North Carolina who is forever writing and talking about the proper dress when preaching. He sees in the dress of the preacher a readiness about preaching. When he talks about his dressing to preach, he always mentions the importance of having his shoes tied tight and double knotted for the task of preaching. For him, it has become a symbol of his readiness to go to work, to do the work that God has called him to do.

A Principle of Readiness

So, how do we get ready? We find our answer in the word preparation. We share the Gospel by being prepared to share the Gospel. Are you ready to share the Gospel? The Bible says that we should be ready.

- 1 Peter 3:15—“But set apart the Messiah as Lord in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”

Always be ready to give a defense for the hope that is within you. There is no reason not to be ready. Twice a year in our church, we lead groups through how to share faith in Jesus Christ.

Then, why should we be ready? Why should we want to be ready? Simply put, because we believe in the power of the Gospel of peace.

The Power of the Gospel of Peace

First, there is the idea of the basic meaning of the gospel—the good news. We have the good news. To fully understand what Paul was talking about, we go back a little bit in this letter to chapter 2.

Then, there is the description of this Gospel being one of peace. Let us be reminded then that when we share the Gospel, we should share it with peace. I've known some who have shared the Gospel almost in anger. The Gospel is a gospel of peace.

As we begin to close, I want to just share one final picture with you to show the Gospel as a powerful resource in this battle against Satan.

Another Picture

In Matthew 16, Jesus is discussing with His disciples who people say that He is. This is a very important passage in the New Testament. Listen to this passage.

And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ "But you," He asked them, "who do you say that I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"

¹⁷ And Jesus responded, "Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven."

The word translated forces is often translated "gates." The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Do you hear the implication of this text? We are to be on the offensive.

That's the legacy of this church, and it must be the future priority of this church, so we come to the "So what" of this message.

So What?

Our "so what" comes in the form of two stories that you have heard before, but let's hear them again.

James I. Kendrick was the second pastor of FBC, Lafayette. E.K. Robinson was the first pastor. He was followed in 1904 by Kendrick. The historians record two little interesting facts about Kendrick. First, his house was the first house in Lafayette to have screens on the door and windows. (That's not really important. I just thought I might tell you that.) The second thing is of incredible importance. Kendrick

became rather well known for riding his bicycle from door to door inviting everyone to church. I want to remind us today that this is the kind of spirit that is necessary in every generation to reach an entire city.¹ We must be on the offensive.

Perry R. Sanders—He led this church for 47 years. Time does not allow all that ought to be said about his leadership and legacy. Let me give you just this one thought. Before he became pastor in 1959, he wrote a letter to the church. I've seen that letter. He asks the church to support him in five things.² The most important is that the church would always have some kind of evangelistic outreach program. Our FAITH program today is a direct result of the faithfulness of carrying out that request for now over 50 years.

¹ Arnold F. Nelson, *A History of Baptist French Missions in South Louisiana*, p. 57.

² The other four are: his desire to have sole responsibility in pulpit supply, his desire to along with a Personnel Committee be able to call other staff members, the permission of the church for him to preach in outside revivals and other speaking engagements as the Lord gave opportunity, and a unified church budget.