

How to Be Spiritually Strong Series

The Weapon of the Gospel (Eph. 6:15)

By
Andy Davis

At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

The Weapon of the Gospel

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Ice Injury

1. On Monday, Mandi was dropping Caleb off at a friend's house so he could help them with wood. As Mandi was stepping out of the van, her foot slid out from underneath her and she fell.
2. After falling, she realized there was snow covering an unseen ice rink. When Mandi got home, she told me she was probably going to be sore the next day.
3. The next day, I asked Mandi how she was feeling after her fall. She had forgotten all about it, being busy with several other things, and said, "Oh yeah, that's probably why my knee hurts a little today." Without firm footing, we can fall and get hurt.
4. I've heard a few stories of people falling on the ice the last few weeks.

B. Now, imagine having poor footing on a field of battle where people are engaging in hand-to-hand combat. How would such a fight go? Perhaps you watched the Superbowl and saw the players slipping all over the field with the new grass that was being used. Without firm footing, a person's ability to stand securely almost disappears. Falling down puts us at risk in day-to-day life. How much more danger would a person be in if they fell during a battle? This is the imagery Paul is using for the third spiritual weapon in Ephesians 6:15.

II. Understanding the Gospel

- A. The third weapon after truth and righteousness is, "having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace". Here, disciples are commanded to put their spiritual shoes on—lace up their cleats.¹ It is likely Paul is drawing this imagery from Isaiah 52:7 which says, "'How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isa. 52:7).² Here, the spiritual preparation that comes as a result of the gospel of peace is the element that provides firm footing in the spiritual battle.³
- B. While the word *gospel* is commonly used within the church, not everyone understands what the gospel is. So, what is the gospel? Paul defines and summarizes the content of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5:

¹ Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (1 Cor. 15:1-5)

¹ Glenn Graham, [An Exegetical Summary of Ephesians](#), 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 558.

² Nahum 1:15, Habakkuk 3:19

³ As we will see later, Paul could also be saying that disciples should be prepared to share the gospel with others as a means of fighting a spiritual battle.

- C. Jesus, being the fulfillment of Scripture in His death and resurrection which provides spiritual benefits to the world, is the core of the gospel and is good news that brings happiness to people's lives. This is the message of Jesus and the message about Jesus. Hearing, understanding, and trusting this message is how "you are saved" (v. 2). If a person demonstrates their true convictions grounded in this message over time in their daily living ("if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain" v. 2), they have believed in Jesus rightly and are saved—rescued from the wrath (a feeling of intense anger) of God (Jn. 3:36).⁴ According to Paul, humanity's default condition before God is being "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3) by nature, because they live in the "lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:3). A person who believes and allows their life to be shaped by the gospel lives in harmony with God and will be gifted His kingdom in eternity (which includes, but is not limited to, heaven). Jesus's death and resurrection is the means by which any person can have their moral failures forgiven from God's perspective, as Jesus "died for our sins" (v. 3). This is a summary of the gospel.
- D. Anyone who wants to develop a robust understanding of the gospel would do well to read through and study the book of Romans, which is the most exhaustive and detailed explanation of the gospel in all the Bible. In Romans, Paul explains in great detail the nature of the gospel and how the gospel impacts a person's life. Disciples who are knowledgeable regarding the content and theology of Romans will be equipped to use the gospel as a spiritual weapon.
- E. How much do I personally value the gospel? Do we honestly believe, as disciples of Jesus and carriers of His message, that we have the message of life? Do we recognize that the gospel affects our lives every day? Disciples are convinced that other people need to hear about Jesus. The gospel is the most important information any person can come to know. Followers of Jesus understand the spiritual condition people are in while they are separated from Jesus's way of life, and they recognize the need for every person to hear the gospel and respond properly to it. Disciples feel the weight of responsibility regarding the significance and weightiness of the message they have been entrusted with. The message of Jesus has transformed their life in positive and significant ways, and they know that same message has the potential of doing this same work in the lives of others. In short, disciples value the gospel as the message that leads to life. Those who truly understand the gospel will comprehend its value. Recognizing the gospel's value will change how disciples interact with and respond to the message of Jesus.
- F. Unfortunately, over time, the church can be easily tempted to devalue the significance of the gospel. Those who have been connected to the church for a while have heard the truths related to the gospel so many times that the gospel can lose its brilliance. We can become so familiar with the gospel that the gospel loses its value. A disciple can hear the message of Jesus and what He did on the cross so much that it becomes old news, which can cause the gospel to lose its wonder. They may even get tired of hearing about Jesus. With time, the gospel can become an ordinary and boring part of our regular routine. When this happens, it's tragic.

⁴ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on John 3:36 "wrath of God" and the punitive outworking of God's righteous anger at sin "wrath of God" on Ephesians 5:6, Romans 5:9

- G. Another way the gospel can lose its shine is this: as we share the message of Jesus (the gospel) with others and see people being unresponsive, disinterested, and view it as foolish (1 Cor. 1:18), we can be tempted to think the gospel is not as valuable as it really is. People’s negative responses to the gospel can lead disciples to question the value of the message they carry based on the common types of reactions they see to it.
- H. Don’t fall prey to these tendencies. Do you think when you tell other people about Jesus, you are giving them the best news they will ever hear in their life? The message we carry is more exciting than any movie we’ve seen on the big screen—and it really happened! The gospel we have has the power to transform lives, families, and communities. People’s hearts are longing for it, even when they don’t realize it. The gospel can heal hurts. It can fix that which is broken. It provides hope. The gospel secures safety for our soul. It gives people peace. The benefits that flow from the gospel are seemingly endless due to God’s generosity. Disciples live in the benefits of the gospel each day for the rest of their lives.

III. The Weapon of the Gospel

- A. While the gospel is extremely valuable (so much so that Jesus told His disciples to spread this message throughout the entire world), it also functions as a spiritual weapon that gives those who follow Jesus spiritual strength.
- B. It is difficult to tell, once again, exactly what Paul means by, “the preparation of the gospel of peace” (v. 15).⁵ In fact, this is the most difficult statement to interpret so far. We find another general statement without any detail or description. As with the other weapons, we have two major options in this case. When Paul refers to “the gospel of peace” (v. 15), he could be referring to disciples carrying the message of Jesus to the world as an act and spiritual military operation. Paul refers to the gospel in this way in other places (Rm. 10:15, Eph. 2:17). By proclaiming and sharing the gospel, disciples invade enemy territory in the spiritual battle. However, Paul could also be referring to the gospel laying a foundation that prepares disciples for the spiritual battle, which seems to fit the immediate context better.⁶ Remember Paul’s repeated command was to “stand firm” and “resist” (Eph. 6:11, 13, 14) instead of attack. The overall emphasis of this section of Scripture is to be reactive to the enemy, not proactive against the enemy (more of a defensive posture). The disciple is prepared for battle by being grounded in the understanding of reconciliation brought about through the sacrifice of Jesus.⁷ While the decision of which meaning is very difficult to decide, giving preference to the immediate context seems to be the best approach.
- C. Paul is telling disciples to be fully grounded in the gospel, so a good spiritual foundation is laid that will help with the inevitable spiritual battles ahead instead of encouraging the disciples to

⁵ Richard J. Erickson, “[Ephesians](#),” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 1032, S. M. Baugh, [Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary](#), ed. Wayne H. House, Hall W. Harris III, and Andrew W. Pitts, *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 551.

⁶ Francis Foulkes, [Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 180, Marvin Richardson Vincent, [Word Studies in the New Testament](#), vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 409, S. M. Baugh, [Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary](#), ed. Wayne H. House, Hall W. Harris III, and Andrew W. Pitts, *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 552.

⁷ Douglas Mangum, ed., [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#), *Lexham Context Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Eph 6:10–17.

share the gospel with others as a means of fighting a spiritual battle. The gospel gives disciples a firm footing from which to fight their spiritual battles. While this is the interpretation we will take, either option is acceptable and understandable in this difficult case.

- D. On this interpretation, when disciples are adequately knowledgeable about and impacted by the gospel, the peace of Jesus will enter their life, which in turn will make them strong during spiritual battles. A deep-seated peace, calm, contentment, and stability comes from the gospel truths (“gospel of peace” v. 15) applied to the heart and life of a disciple. The internal peace that comes to us from Jesus because we are in Jesus (Jn. 14:27, Gal. 5:22) provides spiritual strength for the battle against our enemies. Paul mentions this type of peace in Ephesians (Eph. 6:23), which is the closest reference of peace to our passage.⁸ When disciples receive the peace of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, they are in a position that keeps a firm footing in their spiritual battles.
- E. How does a God-given peace function as a spiritual weapon? Here are a few ways the peace God gives to those who receive the gospel operates as a spiritual weapon. The peace given by Jesus through the Holy Spirit to those who belong to Him reassures us and gives us confidence in times of trouble.⁹ Jesus made this point clearly, “³³ These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (Jn. 16:33). Jesus tells His disciples to expect times when we will be disturbed physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, or economically. Disciples will find themselves in situations that are both challenging and unpleasant. However, in these situations, when we have a tendency to be weak and discouraged spiritually, the peace Jesus gives provides courage (“but take courage”) and hope (“I have overcome the world”). Jesus Himself faced the worst of circumstances as He was unjustly killed for doing what was right. Yet, even in the worst-case scenario, Jesus overcame by being honored by God and raising Himself from the dead. Peace in Jesus is present even in troubled times, which provides spiritual strength.
- F. The peace of God provides courage and hope, which gives us spiritual strength when facing difficult situations. When disciples realize they can have an internal peace despite the external circumstances they face, confidence grows tremendously. God’s provision of peace despite difficult situations leads to disciples realizing that God will provide what they need no matter where they find themselves, which results in confidence (not in their own abilities or that things will turn out okay, but in the faithfulness of God’s provision for them). When disciples come to a knowledge that God is walking with them through the darkest places, confidence is the natural result.
- G. Further, seeing Jesus’s example of living faithfully and knowing how the life of Jesus ultimately turned out gives those who follow Jesus’s way of life hope that no matter how bad their circumstances get, ultimately there will be a good outcome in eternity. Since Jesus endured the worst, so can we, because He will help us. Jesus conquering the world in which we live provides hope: a hope that is not based on circumstances, but on the power and goodness of Jesus. Jesus wins in the end, and disciples can endure faithfully knowing Jesus did the same (1 Pet.

⁸ This peace is accomplished in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rm. 15:13).

⁹ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Thematic Outline on the armor of God “the gospel of peace”

4:19). Since Jesus’s faithfulness in the midst of the worst persecution turned out okay, ours will too.

- H. Further, peace can protect us from discouragement, worry, fear, and anxiety according to Philippians 4:6-7:

⁶ Be anxious for nothing, 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- I. The peace of God “will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (v. 7). Not only will this be a reality for us, but the peace of God will also be present and active in the lives of disciples in a way that goes beyond our ability to understand (“surpasses all comprehension” v. 7). By praying, trusting, and acting in accordance with the goodness of God, protection can be found against negative thoughts, feelings, and reactions. There are plenty of situations, pressures, and dilemmas that we face that can easily cause us to wear down spiritually. Our souls can lose strength from stress, worry, and pressure. Our spiritual strength can drain out of us over time, and even more so when potentially challenging circumstances remain over longer periods of time. This is where the peace of God guards us against wearing down in this way. It is especially easy to give in to anxiety when we are under spiritual attack.
- J. Fear, worry, and anxiety rob us of our strength, but the peace of God guards us from going to these unhealthy places as our minds are fixed on God and truth, and we maintain an attitude of trust toward Him (Isa. 26:3). Who we think God is matters. If a person doesn’t think God is good, wise, powerful, and trustworthy, they will also miss out on peace that could be theirs. Those with a deep trust in God who know His good character will live their lives with an abundance of peace, even when they are tempted to be fearful or worried. The person who does not trust God will not be at peace, either, even if they are a Christian. The peace of God is not automatic; it grows from the application of the gospel to our lives and a deep trust in God.
- K. Still another way peace is a spiritual weapon is that a person who has a peace in their soul will be protected from pursuing dangerous paths. A disciple who is content and in a state of peace in God will not be easily tempted to pursue another course. A satisfied person does not look outside their current situation for fulfillment. This is another way disciples can “stand firm” against the enemy. Peace is connected to sanctification: ²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess. 5:23). It is the “God of peace” who sanctifies every part of us. Individuals who experience peace in their souls have a greater tendency to live obediently toward God. Discontentment motivates disobedience. In this way, the peace that God gives provides spiritual strength.
- L. No one needs to be convinced of the importance of peace. We are all familiar with the angst that is experienced when our souls are not at peace. Our hearts long for it and we chase after it in many ways. However, what is not as easily identified as the value of peace is the means of attaining it. Too many people try to find peace in places where it can’t be found. Wanting security is not a bad thing, but trying to find it in ways that are unreliable is.

- M. Some people try to find peace in the size of their bank account. They think that as long as there are enough zeros in their account, they will experience peace in their soul. However, those who take this path will ultimately discover that no amount of money brings the peace they are longing for. They may relieve some financial stress from their life, but their soul will not experience the peace only God can give.
- N. Others try to find peace in relationships. These people think if they find that person who will love them, accept them for who they are, and stick with them no matter what, they will finally experience the internal peace they are searching for. When we look for our fulfillment in anyone other than God, we will find it a failure and dissatisfying, probably destroying relationships as a result. Even the most wonderful marriage won't provide the deep long-lasting peace our hearts crave.
- O. Another disappointing source of peace is mentally tricking ourselves into thinking everything will be okay (Jer. 6:14, 8:11). This is a shallow healing. Encouraging ourselves that "everything will turn out okay" or "things will get better" may provide a small amount of peace until reality breaks our illusion. Life doesn't always get better. Everything doesn't always turn out okay. Bad things happen because the world is broken. Thinking your situation will improve as long as you can make it through this week, until you get that new job, or until that difficult person is out of your life, will not bring you the peace your soul needs. Even worse is when people tell themselves "God's in control" or "God will take care of it" and then expect to be protected from anything hurtful while thinking nothing bad will happen to them. When bad things happen, they doubt God's faithfulness, goodness or even existence. Simply telling ourselves things will get better does not bring us peace; it actually makes things worse.
- P. God's way of giving us peace is so much better than any other strategy we might come up with for ourselves. Trust God's means of giving us peace, which only comes from Him through the gospel and walking in the way of peace (Lk. 1:79, Gal. 6:16). Disciples need to let the Holy Spirit have His way in our lives so that we can live in the peace of God He provides.

IV. How to Lace Up the Gospel

- A. Now that we know what the gospel is and how the peace that results from it can be used as a spiritual weapon, another question comes to mind: how does a person lace up this footwear so they can have firm footing? A disciple can live with and grow in the peace of God, but how does this work? Time and space only permit three quick possibilities.
- B. First, learn how to view everything through the lens of the gospel. A helpful resource for doing this might be Jerry Bridges' book *The Gospel For Real Life: Turn to the Liberating Power of the Cross...Every Day*. The gospel should have a significant impact on our daily living in many ways. One example comes in a disciple's reaction to the wounds caused by others. When we are wronged or hurt by others, the gospel will change our thoughts, attitude, and reactions to these situations. The gospel creates a desire for reconciliation, knowing that disciples are capable of being peacemakers after they have been reconciled to God. The gospel will also prevent or eliminate bitterness. If reconciliation is not possible, the disciple will know that 1) either Jesus paid a high price for the wrong done and the issue is resolved or 2) the person who wronged us will one day in the future be punished for what was done. The gospel frees people from the

desire and actions of revenge. Disciples will also have the heart to extend forgiveness, knowing how much they have been forgiven by God. In all these ways and more, the gospel makes a practical difference in our day to day living.

- C. Second, peace in our soul can be developed from the gospel by growing in our trust of God. Trust can be deepened by gaining more knowledge of who God is. Seeing how wonderful, good, wise, and powerful God is results in greater trust of Him. We don't naturally trust strangers. Those who are unfamiliar with God probably won't trust Him. We trust people who demonstrate reliability and integrity. No one does this better than God. We can see how amazing He is when we pay attention to who He claims to be, how He interacts with others, the way He acts in this world and throughout history. This information is found throughout the pages of the Bible. When reading the Bible, pay attention to what you learn about God.
- D. Third, deepen your understanding of God's rulership over your life and this world. When people understand the oversight, management, and authority God has over their life and the lives of others, a sense of peace greatly increases. If a person thinks that God being in charge is a good thing (which it is!), they will experience peace in their soul. When we realize God described, in detail, events that would happen hundreds of years before He brought them about, we can begin to realize the depth of God's control over the affairs of humanity, even though each person is free to make their own choices. In fact, God's purposes and human decision work together to bring about God's desired outcomes. God even predicts the choices people make. God claims to be utterly unique in this regard (Isa. 46:8-11).

V. Conclusion

- A. My hope and desire for you would be for you to experience and live with the peace of God in your soul in all circumstances: ¹⁶“Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!” (2 Thess. 3:16).
- B. Those with the peace of God in their soul will have the spiritual strength they need to keep a firm footing throughout the spiritual battles they face.

VI. Questions for Further Thought

- A. Describe a time when you felt very peaceful in your soul. What contributed to this experience? What was the source of your peace?
- B. In what ways did Jesus live His life with a sense of internal peace? How was this peace demonstrated?
- C. What patterns or habits of thought often rob us of the peace of God?
- D. Since the peace of God is not automatic, what attitudes or tendencies hinder our ability to experience the peace that results from the gospel?
- E. How might you be able to increase the internal sense of peace you experience from God?