

## The Book of Ephesians

### Ephesians 6:14-15

#### Session 79: The Armor of God, Part 5

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;<sup>15</sup> And **your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;**

If we are going to understand the gospel of peace, then we must also understand that Paul described this “good news” of “peace” back in Ephesians 2. To get started, we need to look at a small piece of the timeline.

By the time the tower of Babel came along, men were deciding they did not want to retain God in their knowledge. They changed their worship to things of the creation, like the sun, moon and stars. Men did not want to hear about their sin and they did not want restrictions on their behavior. So, God gave the Gentiles up to go their own way, and He gave them over to live in the consequences of their sins.

In Ephesians 2, our apostle details our “time past” condition as Gentiles and then he contrasts that with our condition today in this dispensation of grace. Here in Ephesians 2, when Paul says “time past,” he is talking about everything from the beginning of the prophetic program with Abraham (1921 B.C.) all the way to Acts 9 (AD 32), a total of 1,953 years. The Gentile’s time past condition is the focus of verses 11-12, and it’s not good.

Ephesians 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past **Gentiles in the flesh**, who are called **Uncircumcision** by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;<sup>12</sup> That at that time ye were **without Christ**, being **aliens from the commonwealth of Israel**, and **strangers from the covenants** of promise, **having no hope**, and **without God in the world**:

In these two verses, Paul lists seven aspects of our disadvantaged condition as Gentiles in the world. Before we look at these, we need to know why Paul is pointing this out. I think there are at least a couple of reasons:

1. To demonstrate the greatness of the power of God's grace which is extended to us today in this dispensation of grace (DoG). We cannot realize the greatness of any power until we realize what that power is able to overcome and accomplish. By showing us our time past condition and contrasting it with our present day condition, we see the greatness of God's power at work.
2. To provide a contextual framework for the gospel of peace, which we are called to proclaim as saints. In other words, Paul points out our previous disadvantaged condition as Gentiles so that when we are made aware of the gospel of peace. We not only recognize the great change that has taken place, but we will be eager to make it known, which is what the "preparation of the gospel of peace" is about.

What was our time past condition as Gentiles which was so disadvantageous?

- We were Gentiles in the flesh

Why was being a Gentile such a disadvantage during the dispensation of the Law? While it was possible for Gentiles to become proselytes of Judaism and be saved, very few did so. Why? Because Gentiles were at a disadvantage (when compared to the Jews) for a couple of reasons:

- 1) Gentiles did not receive the written law, like Israel did.

While Gentiles were given evidences of God's existence and Gentiles were given a conscience of right and wrong (general revelation), the Law was far more precise and convicting. As an illustration, when we drive down the interstate, even though it has speed limit signs posted, it is easy not to pay attention to them and, as a result, our speed may creep up, sometimes without us being aware of how fast we were going. But, as soon as the "law" shows up in the form of a state trooper, we immediately remember there is a speed limit and we instinctively slow down.

The law of Moses was much the same and gave the people of Israel clear and detailed instructions on how to live, which was an advantage over what Gentiles knew.

Therefore, the first disadvantage to being a “Gentile in the flesh” is that we did not have as clear a set of instructions as to good and evil as the people of Israel did.

2) Gentiles were considered by the Jews to be unworthy of God’s blessing.

Why would this make a difference? Because the Jews had the instructions from God. If they thought Gentiles were unworthy (which they were, but then so were the Jews), then they would keep it to themselves as to how to obtain God’s blessing – by faithful obedience to the Law. The Jews despised the Gentiles and did not welcome them into their faith. As a result, not many Gentiles knew of the true God or how to live for Him. This second issue is part of the disadvantage of being born Gentile.

- Gentiles were called “Uncircumcision”

This is not just an issue of name-calling. As God dealt with the nation of Israel, circumcision was a requirement for participation in the covenant.

Genesis 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup> And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

This was carried over into the DoG by the Judaizers who said that Paul’s converts had to be circumcised to be saved, which doctrine Paul corrected. The fact that Gentiles were uncircumcised meant that they could not be participants in the covenant, and thus could not receive the blessings of God.

- We were without Christ

The word “Christ” means “Messiah.” Only Israel was promised a Messiah, not the Gentiles.

Matthew 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

While Gentiles come under the protection and blessing of the covenant through Israel, they did not have direct access to the Messiah: another disadvantage for Gentiles.

- We were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel

This means that Gentiles were not considered to be citizens of Israel, which included many blessings. Just as Roman citizenship in Paul's day had advantages, being a citizen of Israel also had advantages from a spiritual perspective, advantages which Gentiles did not have. Not only this, but it means they were outside the worship of the true God and deprived of the true benefits of it.

- Gentiles were strangers from the covenants of promise

God made many covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Levitical, Davidic, etc.) with Israel, but the Gentiles were "strangers" to all of these, which means there was no benefit to them.

- Gentiles had no hope

Paul is talking about the Gentiles who did not have hope in some rational or well-grounded way. In other words, they had no evidence upon which a true hope could be built. Our Blessed Hope is grounded upon the truths of the Scriptures, the doctrines which are revealed in Paul's epistles. The hope of Israel is the one-day return of their Messiah to put down their enemies and set up His kingdom. But as Gentiles in time past, there was no revealed reason for hope.

- Gentiles were without God in the world

The thing about Gentiles is that they had many gods, but not the true God. It seems they worshipped every god imaginable except the one true God, so they were without God in the world, which put them at a distinct disadvantage.

Beginning in verse 13, Paul is now going to describe how things are different now that the dispensational change has taken place. Pay attention to the things contained in this passage because this is what constitutes the gospel of peace, the good news of what God has done to change our condition before Him.

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are **made nigh** by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For **he is our peace**, who hath made both one, and hath **broken down the middle wall of partition** *between us*; <sup>15</sup> Having **abolished in his flesh the enmity**, *(the hatred and hostility between Jew and Gentile)* *even* the law of commandments *contained in ordinances (not talking about the moral law, but the sacrifices, dietary laws, festivals, fasts, etc., which constituted the separateness of the Jews)*; for to make in himself of twain one new man, **so making peace**; <sup>16</sup> And that he might **reconcile both unto God in one body** by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: *(not the enmity between Jew and Gentile, but between sinner and God, making peace with God possible for both Jews and Gentiles)* <sup>17</sup> And came and **preached peace** *(that is to say, the system which Paul proclaimed was adapted to produce peace with God, which was: the readiness of God to forgive and saved both Jews and Gentiles)* to you which were afar off, *(this being the Gentiles)* and to them that were nigh *(the Jews)*. <sup>18</sup> For through him *(Christ)* we both *(Jews and Gentiles)* have access by one Spirit *(who was given to us at the time we trusted Christ as Savior)* unto the Father.

Starting in verse 19, Paul begins to summarize the great changes which have taken place with us Gentiles at the dispensational change and this runs through verse 22.

Ephesians 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but **fellowcitizens** with the saints *(indicating that Gentiles are not 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens in this arrangement but on equal footing with Jews who are in Christ)*, and of the household of God; *(which means we Gentiles have the same rights, privileges and advantages as the Jews as we are also part of the household of God: in other words, our union with them is in God)*

That is a really big change, going from strangers and foreigners without hope to being fellowcitizens with the saints and of the household of God!

In verse 20, Paul will mention the “apostles and prophets” and it is important for us to know exactly who he is referring to as this is all in the context of the DoG.

Ephesians 2:20 And are **built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;

These cannot be the apostles and prophets of the OT because Paul clearly states in chapter 4 that the “apostles and prophets” which pertain to the body of Christ were given AFTER the ascension of Christ.

Ephesians 4:8 Wherefore he saith, **When he ascended up on high**, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Ephesians 4:11 And **he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets;** and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Another way we know is that when referring to the “12” apostles and the OT prophets together in the same verse, the Spirit of God reverses the order to “prophets” first, and then “apostles,” which is just the opposite when referring to those offices in the dispensation of grace.

Luke 11:49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them **prophets and apostles**, and *some* of them they shall slay and persecute:

2 Peter 3:2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

Why is the order reversed to mention the prophets first? Because in Israel’s program, the prophets came before the 12 apostles. But in the dispensation of grace, when God gave the supernatural gifts, the apostles came first and then the prophets. Paul finishes his summary of the gospel of peace in verses 21-22.

Ephesians 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: <sup>22</sup> In whom **ye also are builded together for an habitation of God** through the Spirit.

Now, look back at verse 20 and notice the location of the apostles and prophets.

Ephesians 2:20 And are **built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;

They are in the foundation, that is to say they were given at the beginning of the dispensation of grace, to literally “lay the groundwork” to receive revelation from God and establish the early churches. Having a completed revelation of scripture, we no longer have need of these foundational gifts.

Ephesians 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: <sup>22</sup> In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

The gospel of peace is the message of the dispensational change and the changes which took place with us Gentiles so that God could then present a program of peace to us. The whole mystery of Christ is the good news of peace. Through the one new man which God intends to form during the outworking of the mystery of Christ, God plans to reconcile the heavenly places back to Himself, bringing them into a condition of peace. Once we trusted Christ we are now at peace with God.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

And that is why I said last week that the gospel of Christ is a part of the gospel of peace, for it is the way of salvation for everyone that believeth. So, when Paul says that part of our armor is to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, he is talking about our godly labor in making known the dispensational change, the mystery of Christ, the one new man, and the changed condition of the Gentiles before God.

We should be prepared to preach this gospel of peace, to proclaim it and defend it. If we are prepared for this, Satan is once again thwarted in his desire to have occasion to slander and ridicule us as members of God's new creation. By our proclaiming the gospel of peace, which would entail the manifold wisdom of God, then we are making an impact to God's glory in the heavenly places (HP), and Satan is unable to carry out his spiritual wickedness.

So, let's look at verse 15 one more time.

Ephesians 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

If our feet are "shod" with this message that means that we should take it with us everywhere we go, and speak of it wherever we are.

These three pieces of armor all apply to Satan's phase 1 attack: attack the message. Girding our minds with truth works to keep us from corrupting the message. Putting on the breastplate of righteousness protects our godly living, so that our conduct and behavior is in line with the doctrine. Having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace means we are laboring with God in making known the dispensational change and how it has affected us Gentiles; the good news that we are now in a program which puts us in a position of peace with one another and with God.

Continue to read the passage, Ephesians 6:10-18 for next week.

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**Closing Prayer:**

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Heavenly Father, having been so exhorted in your word, we will stand; by having our minds surrounded with and encompassed by the truth of the Mystery from Paul's epistles. We will be conscious of who we have been made to be in Christ, so that we walk as the children of light you have created us to be. Because You have created us unto good works, and ordained that we should walk in them, then we know we have the power to put on the breastplate of righteousness, and by our actions we demonstrate that we are Your workmanship. And lastly, we pray to be ready and eager to carry forth the message of the dispensational change, that faith in Christ brings us into personal peace with You, God, and that by the mystery of Christ, you have positioned us to bring peace to the heavens, and we pray to do this to your glory. Amen.



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