

Late afternoon, yesterday, I had the privilege of going out with my daughter, Sophie, and my brother, Tim, for a little late afternoon golf. We got in nine holes yesterday afternoon. I told Sophie that my brothers, we normally hit two off the first tee to get loose, and we take whichever drive is best. Sophie hit her drive, and I said, "Honey, you can hit another ball."

She said, "I don't have another ball."

I said, "What do you mean you don't have another ball?"

She says, "I only have one ball."

I said, "What happens if you lose that ball?"

She said, "You can't lose this ball."

I said, "What do you mean?"

She goes, "It's a special kind of ball."

I said, "What do you mean?" I said, "What if you were to slice it and it were to go into the water?"

She said, "Well, this ball senses when it's in the water and little bubbles will begin to come up, and you can retrieve it easily from the water."

I said, "Well, that's the craziest thing." I said, "Well, what about if you hit it in the long rough?"

She said, "Well, it senses when it's in tall grass and there is a fluorescent smoke that pumps out from the ball, and you can easily find your ball even in the long rough."

I said, "Well, what about if our game goes a little long, it starts getting dark, and you hit it over in the trees and in the shrubs; then what?"

She said, "It's the craziest thing, but it has a sensor and if it's dark it begins to 'beep, beep, beep, beep', it starts beeping, and you can go directly and find your ball."

I said, "That is amazing." I said, "I've got to get one of those." I said, "Where did you get that ball?"

She said, "I don't know. I found it." You can't lose that ball.

I remember as a child ... I've maybe shared this with you all before. I remember as a child-- and Bob and Ruth you might remember-- Campbellsville, Kentucky had Bargain Days. I remember, I think maybe it was in August before school started. You would go to downtown Campbellsville, and I remember vividly tables being out on the sidewalks in front of the stores. That's where my mom was from and where my grandparents lived. I remember I would be, my brothers and I, we'd get our back to school shoes and our new Sunday shoes, that's our dress shoes. We called them Sunday shoes back then.

We would go there. My mom recalled a time when my grandmother, when she was living, had gone with us to Bargain Days. My grandmother had picked up one shoe, another woman had picked that same shoe out of the same pair, and neither one of them were going to lay down their shoe. There was an old-fashioned standoff. There was an old-fashioned standoff at a Bargain Day's table in Campbellsville.

Over the last several weeks, we've been going through a series called *Putting on the Armor*. As you remember, Paul wrote this letter when he was believed to have been in prison in Rome. When Paul wrote this letter, no doubt, he witnessed every day the Roman centurion guards marching back and forth with their armor. He watched these soldiers, maybe he was even chained to one of these soldiers. Well, the Holy Spirit spoke to Paul while in that Roman prison, and he began to use the imagery of the armor and to relay it and relate it to us in Christian terms. He began to describe the armor of God. He also made it clear that our enemy is not other people. He said, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

He made it clear that it's not with another person. Yet, some of you are here today, and you're in a standoff. No, not with the lady at the bargain table, but you're in a standoff with a family member, you're in a standoff with a friend, you're in a standoff with a coworker. You have to realize they're not the real enemy because the real enemy is Satan, it's the devil. That's who the real enemy is. Let's be clear about that. He's the real enemy, not that person that you're in a standoff with.

Paul highlighted the breastplate, he highlighted the belt, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness. Today, we are to put on what we're calling sandals of peace, to be fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, or in other words, to put on sandals of peace. Whatever you're going through today, know this, we are to be ready for a battle, we're to be ready for spiritual warfare. The way we are protected, and the way that we can combat our enemy is by putting on this armor.

Today, as we put on the sandals of peace, we'll find that they are practical. They are practical. How many of y'all have ever bought shoes that are impractical? Ladies, I'm not picking on you, but how many of you have bought shoes that are pretty instead of practical-- high, high heels, that you've got to take off your shoes. Men, I hope you've not bought any of those shoes. But how many of us have bought shoes before because of how they look? Maybe they're too small, maybe they're too big, they look good, but they're not practical. These shoes of peace are practical shoes.

Now, when Paul starts talking about the Roman soldiers' shoes, he's talking about a shoe that was part boot and part sandal. It was called "caligae." It was made of straps that fit around the foot and went up around the ankle, and it was adjustable, breathable. Then on the bottom, the soles were made of extra layers of leather. They'd have little hub nails that were clinched in the bottom of the shoe. These were little hollow pieces of metal that were placed strategically in some kind of pattern on the bottom of these sandals or caligae. They would help the soldier be able to grip the soil to stand firm when they were fighting against the enemy. They were also used to keep their footing sure and secure when they were marching over every kind of terrain. All kinds of bumpy and rough terrain, they were able to maneuver with those spikes, if you will, on the bottom of their shoes, walking whatever path they were on.

Our lives as Christians, if you're here and you're a follower of Christ, we sometimes have to walk down a rough road, don't we? We sometimes have to go down to rocky path; we sometimes have to deal with some people that are rough and tough and a little bumpy, if you will, a little edgy; and sometimes it's hard for us to maneuver down that path. That's why we are to be prepared.

If you were here last Sunday night, I told you at the end of the service, Lord willing and the heat don't rise, we were going to meet outside by the cross. Well, the heat did rise, and we moved back indoors, but we had a beautiful service out in the front foyer. Everyone had their lawn chairs spread out inside of the foyer. The acoustics were phenomenal as we sang inside that foyer, a great crowd. We talked about not only putting on the armor but putting on these clothes of grace.

If you look in Colossians chapter 3:12 through 14 it says, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, to clothe yourself or put on," and then he began to describe these articles of clothing, to put on, "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive if you have a grievance against someone, forgive as the Lord forgave you. Above all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Look, when we're dealing with difficult people, when we're walking a rough road in this light, we are to have the practicality to be kind, to be compassionate, to be humble, to be gentle, to be patient, to bear with people, to forgive as the Lord forgave you, and above all these, to be loving to people. How practical is it to walk around with hate in your heart, how practical is it to walk around with anger always in your heart, how practical is it to walk around with unforgiveness? We as Christians, I say it almost weekly, are called to be different than the world, and so we clothed ourselves in a different way.

What do you think Jesus was talking about in Matthew chapter 5:verse 44 and that great sermon on the Mount when he said, "I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." How many of us hate our enemies, and the last thing we're ever going to do is pray for them, but that's what we're called to do.

I spoke with someone recently who was sharing with me about a family member that had wronged them many years ago, hurt them. Yet, they were carrying that pain around and that resentment. I said, "What they did to you was wrong, there's no doubt about it. It's wrong as wrong can be, and you were hurt by it. I'm so sorry for that." I said, "Unless you forgive them, and you release them to the Lord, you will always remain the victim the rest of your life. They're not going to be thinking about you, probably, and how they hurt you. You're going to be thinking about how they hurt you." I said, "I want to pray that you would forgive them, release the offender to the Lord, and then that's between them, and the Lord to work it out, but you will be set free. Would you be willing to do that today? It's the right thing, and the practical thing for you to do, to forgive and to release them to the Lord and to release the offender that's wronged you or hurt you."

These shoes of peace are practical, but they're also proactive. They're proactive. When we stand firm, when the soldier stood firm, it was not only a posture of defense, but it was also important that we would have a posture of moving forward, not just waiting for the enemy to just wreak havoc on us, but that we would keep moving forward.

You know who I think about? I think about David. You remember in 1 Samuel chapter 17 when the Philistine army was taunting the Israelite army. Do you remember, they were calling them names, and

they were boasting and bragging because they had big old nine-foot giant, Goliath? He was just talking smack to the Israelites, "Who's going to come out here?" They were scared to death. Do you remember little David when he was bringing bread to his brothers, he didn't like that this giant was bullying the Israelite army, and he was wanting to take the battle to him. They were laughing because he was little. He was a little guy, little David, little shepherd boy, David.

But, do you remember? Do you remember what David said in 1 Samuel 17:verse 45? "You come against me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come against you and the name of the LORD Almighty." In verse 47, he says, "The battle belongs to the LORD." Then, it said in verse 48, "David ran to the battle line to meet him." David ran, he moved forward, ran to the battle line to meet that giant, Goliath. Y'all know the rest of the story. He defeated him. He defeated the giant, and he took the battle to him. We want to have a position, a posture, and our lines of defense, but there are times where we move forward.

I think about a scripture we've already used in this series, James 4:7 and 8, when it says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded," which was referenced to the priest going into the tabernacle or to the temple to symbolically cleanse themselves, to have a pure heart, pure hands, pure heart, and to have their heart changed from being double-minded. Their loyalty was here, loyalty was there-- when we are to have no other gods before us. Worship the one true god. That we must move forward. Be proactive not only in going against the enemy, but we are to be proactive as followers of Christ, of sharing the good news. Have your feet readied to be prepared to go out and share the gospel, to share the good news.

How many of us are actively sharing our faith with our coworkers, with our neighbors, with our friends? That's what we're ... We are not saved just for our good, but we are also saved to be good for others, to share our faith with others, to take the good news. I think about that image in Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation?"

You know what they were talking about? A messenger that would be up on a mountain watching a battle take place and after their army would win, this messenger would go running back to tell the King and the other people that, "We've won, victory has come."

How beautiful is the messenger that brings a message that we are victorious? That's what we're to do as Christians because Jesus has already won the battle, and we must go bring the good news to the people and say, "The battle's already won. Let's celebrate, let's have victory."

It's like Paul saying in Philippians 3:14, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which Christ has called me heavenward." God Has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus, we press on, we keep being a witness, we keep sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, the Gospel. Is that something you're doing today? That's what we're called to do. Not only do we wear them to protect us, but we also are to be on the offense and sharing with others.

I shared at the early service that back in the day, and you all maybe heard me share this before, when I was playing basketball in sixth grade over at Camp Dick Robinson in Garrard County, where my dad was principal, I had Chuck Taylor high-top, canvas tennis shoes. Some of y'all remember those, high-top Chuck Taylor. Man, I loved squeaking those shoes on that old gym floor. Our gym looked like from the

movie *Hoosiers*. That's what our gym looked like. To take the ball out on one side of the floor, you had to turn your feet sideways like this to have room in the out-of-bounds and throw it in. But, anyway, that's beside the point.

I remember the next year, I had my eyes set on the prize of some other shoes. Kentucky, University of Kentucky, was playing in leather All-Star Converse, and I said, "I've got to have that shoe." I remember my dad and our family going over to Harrodsburg to Aggie Sale's Sporting Goods. Any of y'all remember Aggie Sale's? It was a big two-story house on the outskirts of town, and I remember walking in, seeing that leather pair with the star. These Converse All-Star, they were standing out among the rest. It had a light around it. It was like, (singing). I'd walk to other's shoes, nothing, and I'd see those, (singing). I was like, "I've got to have them."

I remember my dad saying, "Son, those are too expensive." If my memory serves me correctly, they were \$30. "Son, I just don't know if we can afford them."

"Dad, I've got to have them. I mean I will play so much better in those leather shoes." I remember he and my mom having a serious talk about it. I mean \$30. I mean, my son has a closet of Kyrie's, Steph Curry's, and Jordan's.

I remember finally they got them for me, and I was like, "Oh, yeah." I was so proud, so much so that I was playing ... man, I felt like I could jump higher, run faster, slide quicker with those. I was so proud that I would, after a game, I had my little white polish to keep them white. Am I the only one that ever did that? I mean, they were so good, I even got 30 points against Crab Orchard over in Lincoln County. It had to be the shoes, had to be the shoes.

But, anyway, I think about our shoes of peace or sandals of peace. When we wear these shoes, it should, even in our mind and in our lives, calls us to stand up taller, to be more aggressive sharing our faith, to be willing to go, as the Great Commission says, to make disciples of all ... and being willing, go and do what God has called us to do. See, these shoes are practical, and they're proactive, but they're also peaceful. They're also peaceful.

I think about what Paul said in Romans 5:1 ... "Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you have peace with God today? We have been justified just as if we never sin, justified through our faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That means the way we experience real peace is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That's real peace. If you've never done that, you're never going to have real peace.

We have peace with God. Then, we have the peace of God. Colossians 3:15, it talks about that we are to have the peace of God, it says, "Therefore, that he is our," he is our umpire if you will, and because of that peace that we have, "then we're members of one body," that we have the peace of God. Another instance of the peace of God if you're here today, and you're going through the rough patch, you're worried, you're anxious; is that familiar passage. Let me get back to Colossians 3:15, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart since you are members of one body," to act as an umpire, as a referee to keep us in-bounds.

Then, that passage that many of you know, if you're going to memorize a couple verses then I challenge you to memorize Philippians 4:6 and 7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer

and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. The peace of God that passes or transcends all understanding will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus." Did you hear that? "Don't be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and ... with thanksgiving, a heart of gratitude, and the peace of God that passes all understanding," we're protected through the peace of God, "will protect our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Do you have peace with God? Are you experiencing the peace of God?

1 Peter 3:8, Peter said, "Let all of us live in harmony with one another." Then, in verse 11 he says, "Seek peace and pursue it." Do you seek peace or do you look for trouble? I think some people just sit around and look for conflict or trouble, and if there's not any, I'm going to start some. That's for the devil, the devil.

John 10:10 says, "The thief comes only to steal, to kill, and to destroy, but Jesus said, 'I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly or to the full.'" The devil wants division, the devil wants conflict, the devil wants to steal your peace. Don't let him.

Jesus said in those great Beatitudes, Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called," what, "children of God." That's what we're called to be, peacemakers, not trouble makers.

In closing, I appreciate that we have a Bible study group. They didn't know I was going to preach this series and I didn't realize they were going to be doing a study on the armor of God, a Priscilla Shirer bible study called *The Armor of God*, Priscilla Shirer from War Room and she's in Overcomer, the movie we're going to see tonight, and she's written a lot of great material, Bible studies. Priscilla Shirer shared in this study that we're going to be doing here in September, a Bible study group, about going on a trip.

She and her husband went with several other couples on vacation, and she said one of her friends said, "You know, when I go on vacation, I pack my suitcase, it seems like the majority of space is taken up by my shoes. I have so many shoes that go with every outfit." Then she said, "With all these different shoes, I forgot to pack my tennis shoes. I hope we don't go do any real activity because I didn't pack any tennis shoes."

The friend's husband said, "All those shoes and no go shoes." *All those shoes and no go shoes*. All the shoes that we have, the most important would be the go shoes, where we go and live our lives for the Lord and share with others the good news of the gospel of peace that comes from Jesus Christ.

Are you ready today to go and live for him, are you ready in a moment to come down this aisle and give your heart and life fully surrendered to Jesus, are you ready to go from this place and share with someone the greatest hope this world has through the Lord Jesus Christ, or are you just going to stay back on the back lines? Maybe you need to re-enlist today. Maybe you used to serve in the Lord's army, and you've grown complacent. You kept pushing others in front, let them serve, let them do battle, let them. Maybe it's time for you to sign up again, re-enlist and say, "I'm ready to get off the sidelines, I'm ready to get in the game, and I'm ready to start serving the Lord, I want to be used in the Lord's army because I know he already won."

Are you ready to do that even now as we pray together? Lord, I pray right now in this stillness of this moment that if there are any men, women, or young people here that have never taken that first step by enlisting in your family, your army; I pray that would come today, confess their sin, ask you for

forgiveness, repent from the old way, and began to walk in newness of life. Or, Lord, maybe there's a Christian that's again, been walking on some rough terrain, been caught up in the wrong crowd with the wrong people doing the wrong thing, and may they know today, God, that they can come back to you, you will forgive them, and you will love them, and they can begin to march in God's army.

Or Lord, maybe there are folks that have been looking for a church family. This is a field hospital for the wounded, for the sin-sick, for the hurting, a place where they can come and be healed, made whole, serve you and make a difference. We're more like a fort on this hill, a lighthouse saying, "Come and experience the light and love of Jesus, come and experience healing, and come and have your life changed and renewed. Oh, God, give us the boldness today to live for you who is willing to die for us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.