

Spiritual Warfare: Peace

Ephesians 6:15

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When I was in high school I won a competition. Our school and the vocational school were together. For a semester I was in the Distributive Education Club of America. Each fall the clubs would have a competition with each student required to make a presentation. My presentation was a pair of men's shoes.

They were brown wing tip dress shoes. The shoe was all leather, made in America. The shoemaker was the most famous and oldest national brands in the country. The distinctive style is still timeless and enduring. The top leather was soft and supple calf leather keeping the foot comfortable whether sitting, standing or walking all day. The sole was three layers molded together and hand cut, then handstitched to the upper. This design was from the original shoemaker and has proven its durability for decades. The sole was Vulcan rubber both glued and tacked onto the sole. It is at the perfect thickness to provide the wearer with excellent posture and walking comfort. The wing tip dress shoe comes in men's sizes seven to fourteen in half-sizes, normal, wide, and extra wide. You can also get this shoe in black and burgundy. You will regret not having a pair in each color.

After sitting through many other boring projects and presentations the master of ceremony announced the third, second, and first place winners. My name was the last name called. I went onto an illustrious two year high school career as a shoe salesman.

I'm not here to talk about shoes, but to talk about the peace that comes from wearing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:15 (NLT) For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.

As the spiritual battles rage there is peace through the Good News of Jesus. Often our spiritual battles look like trials and tribulations. It may be hair splitting to say the troubles in your life aren't spiritual battles. I am convinced that the devil wants to bring you down. He will use bad things disguised as good things to do it. He will use all the bad stuff to mess up your relationship with Jesus.

Regardless of how we are attacked our relationship with Jesus can remain strong. We can stand firm in our faith. Our faith will become stronger as we trust Jesus. As we proclaim that Jesus is God's Son and that we are in a right relationship with God we can experience God's peace. It's like putting on shoes to walk across the hot pavement, or through the mud, or in the snow. The shoes give us the assurance of stability, safety, and protection.

All those who trust Jesus can't explain, but know His peace. No matter the situation or circumstance when disciples of Jesus call upon Him, they are aware of His peace. His peace is already within us, He gave us His peace when He forgave our sins. When we believed that He is God's Son, that He lived and died, and rose from the dead we were saved from our sins. This is the Gospel.

We are peace with God because Jesus put us into a right relationship with Him. Jesus, God's Son, lived that perfect life of faith, became our sacrifice. He is the truth that He is God and has been with God for all of eternity. He is the truth that sits at the right hand of God today, advocating for our lives. As we believe Jesus His peace is revealed in our lives. His peace replaces fear and anxiety. His peace overcomes worry. His peace fights off doubt.

The peace of God cannot be understood by sinners. Those who don't have Jesus as their Savior and Lord can't know this peace. The people who are outside of God's church are not able to rely on God's peace.

As believers we need to remember each day that because of the Gospel we are at peace with God. We have God's peace in this world of sin and temptations. We need to claim His peace for each day as put on each article of clothing. Just as we put on the truth of Jesus, we need to put on His peace. Just as we claim our righteousness with God, we need to put on His peace.

Then as the spiritual battles rage we can be at peace. When the devil attacks we are at peace deep in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He is our Savior and Lord in every situation. He is the truth no matter what we face. He are able to stand in the battle because we are wearing the shoes of peace. Being at peace in the spiritual means we become a witness to the Good News of Jesus that can save any sinner who believes.

Mark 4:37–40 (NLT) But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?" When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Like the disciples we panic in the spiritual battles. The disciples faced the spiritual battle of faith in God. There are two separate events in the Bible with Jesus being at sea during a storm. In both of the events the disciples, four of whom are fisherman, are losing their minds. Storms happen often on the Sea of Galilee. These storms are intense with strong winds, big waves, and heavy rain. The disciples who weren't fishermen are expected to be in a panic for their lives. The sea is a stranger to them. They like dry ground. They don't like waves crashing over the sides of the boat. They don't want to die.

They have been with Jesus watching and listening and learning. Miracles have happened, great teaching about faith has been spoken. Their confidence level in Jesus is very high. They know that He has been sent by God. They have given up their day jobs to be Him wherever He goes. But, they aren't at peace with dying at sea.

This is a spiritual battle. The situation is real, as real as it gets. For them this is a moment carved out in time for them to trust Jesus. Their faith is being tested. Their understanding of who Jesus is and what He can do is being tested. The devil would like nothing more than for them to curse God and die. He is continuously seeking to drive a wedge between Jesus and His followers.

This situation almost breaks their faith. While Jesus sleeps they go into a panic. But, they ultimately call upon Jesus, with the faith that He will act. The next time they were in a storm at sea, Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water.

You don't have to face life and death situations to forget to trust God. You and I forget to trust God every other day, right? Some little thing comes up: losing our cell phone, talking with our boss, looking at a deadline, cooking dinner, tripping over our feet and we start cursing, worrying, stressing, and throwing things.

Big things happen: a truck plows into our car, lightning strikes the garage, a rash breaks out all over your body, the doctor says stroke and we collapse in a puddle of pity, our brains fill up with more ideas than we can process, legs give out and we quit. Anyone of those things can be part of life and also be a spiritual battle. Bad stuff, small and monumental and everything in between, happens to sinners and Christians.

Without giving the devil too much credit, he'll use any and all of them to get to you stop looking at Jesus and look at yourself and the problem. We are in a panic, we are anxious beyond control, we are overwhelmed. We don't call upon Jesus, we don't trust Him, we aren't at peace. We forgot to put on the peace of Jesus that comes from His Good News.

Luke 22:42 (NLT) "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

In the ultimate spiritual battle Jesus was at peace and shared God's grace. Jesus questioned His Father and may have recognized the horror of the coming spiritual battle. This was a moment of decision for Jesus. He has faced the spiritual battles all of His life of being a great miracle worker, using His power for selfish purposes, and ruling on earth by giving up heaven. He has turned away every time, trusting His Father. He has done miraculous things, trusting His Father. He has used His power and authority, trusting His Father. He has brought the Kingdom of God to earth, trusting His Father.

Now, the spiritual battle is easily seen as the battle between life and death; pain, suffering and selfishness. If Jesus chooses life over death, all of us die in our sins. If Jesus chooses selfishness over pain and suffering, then all of us will be suffering in pain in hell. Throughout His life Jesus has been at peace. Even though He has been tormented and tempted by the devil, He has been at peace.

Let's be sure that we all agree that His peace was more than the absence of conflict. His peace begins within Himself and radiates through every situation. He is always at peace regardless of the circumstances happening around Him. His peace as a man comes from trusting God. As a man Jesus trusted God to be good, to work all things for good, because God is good. Jesus' trust of God was experienced through God's love for Him and for all creation.

I mention Jesus as person, not as the Son of God. Jesus is the Son of God, He is God. But, He came to this earth as a baby, lived His life like any other person, and was tempted just like you and me. Jesus had to be a flesh and blood person or His life of complete loyalty to the Father and trust in God would have meant nothing. It's true God can do anything. If Jesus were not a person who lives and breathes, can feel pain and endure suffering than all of His actions and words were just smoke and mirrors.

The peace that comes from knowing the gospel is empowering and encouraging. Jesus was empowered as He prayed. He was encouraged as He pleaded with the Father. He trusted God instead of being selfish. Jesus could trust the Father because He was at peace with God's plan for

Him to die and rise again saving us from our sin. We didn't deserve to be saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus, but that's God's grace.

Since Jesus was at peace with the Father's plans He shared God's grace. We received forgiveness, a new life filled with peace, and heaven for all of eternity. That is Good News, that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Start tying together God's plan for salvation, the Good News, with peace. When we put them together we know that we can not only be victorious in the spiritual battles, but that those around us need this peace, they need Jesus.

God has a plan to save everyone, the Gospel. Jesus was at peace, believing the Good News, and grace was given to all humanity. Those who receive this grace from God are saved and filled with peace.

Isaiah 52:7 (NLT) How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!

To those who are losing the spiritual battle give them the peace of Jesus. In your spiritual battles know that God reigns over the heavens and the earth. That means God rules all the time in every situation. As we put on the truth, righteousness we are at peace. I am no different than any other person. I fail to claim the truth of Jesus. I forget that I am in a right relationship with God. Then I'm not at peace during the day. The truth, righteousness, and peace are already mine, but I forget to claim them, and stand firmly in them.

When the spiritual battle begins I try to fight it on my own, with my own strength. But, as soon as I claim the peace, the righteousness, the truth I am victorious. My life in the spiritual battle becomes a witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. My life reflects the grace of God at work within me. Your life becomes a witness of God's grace within you when you put on the truth, righteousness, and peace. This is what we mean when we say that others will see Jesus in us. His truth will shine in the midst of the battle, because we are standing in Him. His righteousness will shine while the devil attacks, because we are standing in Him. His peace will radiate from our lives during the conflicts and troubles, because we are standing in Him. People will see this in us. People want to see His peace, His righteousness, His truth being lived out in our lives.

Sharing the grace of God and giving away the peace of Jesus offers others everything they need. Those who live outside of God grace are suffering now. They are in pain. Sometimes they try to hide their suffering. Then they proclaim their troubles. Sometimes they cover up their pain. Then they shout out in pain. Those who are without God in their lives are in need of a savior. They need the God who rules in heaven and earth. They need the truth. They need to be in a right relationship with God. They need to be at peace.

People want to be victorious, give them God's grace and peace. People want to be in a right relationship with God, give them God's grace and peace. People want the truth, give them God's grace and peace.