



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on Sunday, May 15th 2022 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.

Whilst some are able to meet in person, others we know are still at home. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Our service today is led by Alec, as we continue our series of studies entitled "Spiritual Warfare" Joy plays the piano for us today as we gather.

Alec welcomes everyone: in Polish and German, and apologies that his French is not very good! That was for Esther's benefit, who is home for the summer after her time in France! He continued: "Good morning everybody, and a very warm welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church here in Galligreaves. I am the pastor's wife's husband and I will be leading through this service this morning and with Gods help, and with the help of Paul, Debbie and Esther, Becky leading prayers and Joy, who we've already heard playing the piano." He continues with an aside to Colin - saying how much Colin appreciates Joy playing the piano - Joy being Colin's wife!

Our Opening verses are from Ephesians 6:10-13, which were displayed on the screen for all present to say aloud:

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

Alec continued: 'British poet Edith G. Cherry (1872-1897) contracted polio at a young age and dealt with severe health struggles all through her short life. Yet after her home call at the age of 25, she left behind enough poems to fill two books, with many of the poems written before she was 15 years old.

Her best-known hymn, "We Rest on Thee," takes its inspiration from an incident in the life of godly king Asa of Judah. When a huge army from Ethiopia came out against the vastly outnumbered army of Judah, "Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said... 'Help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude..." (2 Chron 14:11, KJV)

Nearly sixty years after Edith's death, five young missionary families plotted their attempt to reach the warlike Waorani tribe living along the Río Curaray in the jungles of Ecuador. On January 3, 1956, the men met for prayer. "At the close of their prayers the five men sang one of their favourite hymns, 'We Rest on Thee,' to the stirring tune of 'Finlandia.' Jim and Ed had

sung this hymn since college days and knew the verses by heart. On the last verse their voices rang out with deep conviction. 'We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender, Thine is the battle, and Thine shall be the praise....' (Elisabeth Elliot in "Through Gates of Splendour"). Five days later the five men (Nate Saint, Roger Youderian, Ed McCully, Pete Fleming, and Jim Elliot) became the most famous missionary martyrs of the twentieth century.

I met Elisabeth Elliot in Sheffield once. She personally signed for me her book on the guidance of God which has the title "A slow and certain light". You and I and Sibylle are living in that light, the light of the living and all-powerful God.

I remember her saying how people always came up to her and said how wonderful they found it that the martyrdom of Jim and four other believers had led over years to many people coming to faith and to many churches growing; then she said: "He was my husband."

Nevertheless, whether an ancient Jewish king, a sickly 19th-century British poet, courageous 20th-century American missionaries, or 21st-century believers facing a world of severe uncertainty, we all can find rest in the sovereign God of heaven and earth.

We join in our opening hymn: "We rest on thee our shield and our defender" , which Joy plays on the piano.

We rest on thee, our Shield and our Defender!
We go not forth alone against the foe;
strong in thy strength, safe in thy keeping tender,
we rest on thee, and in thy name we go;
strong in thy strength, safe in thy keeping tender,
we rest on thee, and in thy name we go.

Yea, in thy name, O Captain of salvation!
In thy dear name, all other names above:
Jesus our righteousness, our sure foundation,
our Prince of glory and our King of love,
Jesus our righteousness, our sure foundation,
our Prince of glory and our King of love.

We go in faith, our own great weakness feeling,
and needing more each day thy grace to know:
yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing,
"We rest on thee, and in thy name we go";
yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing,
"We rest on thee, and in thy name we go."

We rest on thee, our Shield and our Defender!
Thine is the battle, thine shall be the praise;
when passing through the gates of pearly splendour,
victors, we rest with thee, through endless days;
when passing through the gates of pearly splendour,
victors, we rest with thee, through endless days.

Alec reads I Samuel 17: 4-50 (saying he was following on from the Russian speaking church yesterday, whom spoke 1 Samuel 14/15 for his usual 45 minutes, Alec did not plan to speak for that length today!)

A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armour of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield-bearer went ahead of him.

Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, 'Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us.' Then the Philistine said, 'This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.' On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul's time he was very old. Jesse's three eldest sons had followed Saul to the war: the firstborn was Eliab; the second, Abinadab; and the third, Shammah. David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

Now Jesse said to his son David, 'Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them. They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines.'

Early in the morning David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and asked his brothers how they were. As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear.

Now the Israelites had been saying, 'Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his family from taxes in Israel.'

David asked the men standing near him, 'What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?'

They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, 'This is what will be done for the man who kills him.'

When Eliab, David's eldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, 'Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.'

'Now what have I done?' said David. 'Can't I even speak?' He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

David said to Saul, 'Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.'

Saul replied, 'You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.'

But David said to Saul, 'Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.'

Saul said to David, 'Go, and the Lord be with you.'

Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armour on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

'I cannot go in these,' he said to Saul, 'because I am not used to them.' So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield-bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, 'Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?' And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 'Come here,' he said, 'and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!'

David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands.'

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

Alec had divided his message today into 3 parts - aiming for 15 minutes in total.

Time for part 1 TRUTH

“Be ready! Let the truth be like a belt around your waist.” (CEV)

Pilate said, “What is truth?” didn’t he?

Jesus said, “I am the way the truth and the life” and lived this out and stood in front of Pilate but Pilate didn’t want to see the truth, didn’t want to know the truth, didn’t want to understand the truth

There are many acronyms of truth. Here is a really good one! TRUTH is Taking Real Understanding to Heart. This means taking truth to our hearts, storing truth in our hearts, binding truth into our hearts AND LIVING TRUTH OUT IN OUR LIVES.

And here is another one.

Truth is the real undoubtedly, unbelievably true home.

You see we can live in the truth; we can be at home with it and in it. We can be at peace knowing the truth. We can work constructively knowing the truth.

There is an objective truth which is meant here; the truth in the sense of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and in the Word of God. But there is also a subjective sense which is to say truth in the sense of sincerity or integrity. To be deceitful, to lapse into hypocrisy, to resort to intrigue and scheming is like trying to play Satan’s game in which we will be defeated. Satan hates transparent, clear truth. He loves darkness; light causes him to flee. For our spiritual, mental and emotional health we need to be honest with ourselves and about ourselves before God.

The belt of truth is not provided for us as a decoration. It is not intended that we use it to draw attention to ourselves. Part of the function of the belt was to be able to secure all that otherwise might hinder our ability to move and our preparedness and our readiness.

We see this in Exodus 12:11 for there the Israelites were told to eat the Passover with their belts fastened. Why was that? Well, because of the potential threat of antagonism around them they wanted to be engaging in the pursuit of God so that they were ready to take a stand for God.

We need the belt of truth for protection like we need a seatbelt in a car or during take-off or landing or because of possible turbulence on a flight. Without wearing the belt of truth we will not be safe in the hands of our God instead experiencing a very turbulent journey in very turbulent times.

But maybe you say well truth is relative; it is how you define it; it is how you imagine it; it is how you perceive it.

But it is only the truth of the gospel that can dispel the lies of the Evil One and set us free.

Paul is constantly emphasizing this in all of his writings. As he gets to the end of his life, as he is now in jail in Rome for the last time dictating the letter to the Ephesian church, as he writes his letter to Timothy, what is his great concern for him? It is that Timothy will remain committed to the truth—that he will make sure that the truth of the gospel that has come to him first through his grandmother and then through his mother and that has now become his very own, that he will not deviate from course in relationship to it, that he will hold fast to the truth, that he will keep as a pattern of sound words that which has been conveyed to him. And in that very same letter, he reminds Timothy that he has in his congregation those who are “always learning” but “never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.”

Maybe you think that perhaps tolerance and acceptance will win the war a little more easily than truth statements. But cultural accommodation at the expense of truth has absolutely no place in the church of God. Cultural relevance to demonstrate truth on the other hand has.

What did Jesus say to the woman at the well? “Why don’t you go call your husband?” She said, “Well, I don’t have a husband.” He said, “No, you’re right. You’ve had five husbands, and you are living now with another man. He told it like it was, so that he might give her living water. He defined the issues, so that she might then be confronted with the truth.

Is that what you and I really want to hear?

At this point Alec shared the Notices for the week, which were displayed on the screen at Bethesda. They included a reminder that there would be a Church Members Meeting on Tuesday evening, and our prayer meeting on Thursday evening. The funeral service for Janet’s brother will take place on Thursday, and that for Brian Fish on Friday, at 1.45pm.

We also plan to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee on Friday June 3rd from 4-6 pm.

He then invited Esther to come to say hello, who said it was good to see everyone!!

Alec then introduced our Offering hymn “Through our God we shall do valiantly” (The Victory Song), which Joy will play valiantly!

Through our God we shall do valiantly,
it is He who shall tread down the enemy.

We’ll sing and shout His victory -
Christ is King!

For God has won the victory and set His people free,
His word has slain the enemy; The earth shall stand and see that -
Through our God we shall do valiantly,
it is He who shall tread down the enemy.

**We'll sing and shout His victory -
Christ is King, Christ is King, Christ is King!**

AUTHOR: Dale Garratt CCLI SONG # 21404

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Scripture in Song CCL No 5664

Alec prays as he receives the Offering gifts from Brenda:

"Loving Heavenly Father, thank you that we can worship you as king of the world, King of our hearts, King of our lives, and King of your church here in Galligreaves. We thank you for all that to give to us each day of our lives, and we return small tokens of all thanks to you, asking that you would use these for the extension of your kingdom here and throughout the world. In Jesus name we pray. Amen."

He continues with his Message part 2 RIGHTEOUSNESS

In 1 Thess. 5:8 Paul wrote of the "breastplate of faith and love", but in Ephesians as in Isaiah 59:17 the breastplate consists of "righteousness".

In Paul's letters this usually means "justification", that is to say God's gracious initiative in putting us, who have made a mess of our lives by going against God's commands and not seeking a relationship with Him who is our Maker and Sustainer, right with Himself through Christ. This is the Christian's breastplate for no spiritual protection is greater than a right relationship with God.

So we ask ourselves the dinosaur question this morning, the survival question: Do we own the breastplate of righteousness? For without this we are lost.

Maybe you say well actually up to now I've lived a really good life, tried to avoid hurting people, cared for others, looked after my family.

Maybe you say I believe in a God who helps those who help themselves.

Maybe you say I'm genuinely religious. I'm really interested in God but I'm OK in myself.

Maybe you say on balance I think God must be fairly happy with the way I'm running my own life.

But you see without the righteousness of Christ, without the forgiveness of our wrongs, without reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ even our best thoughts, best actions, best wishes and intentions are not the same as being right with God and owning the breastplate of righteousness. We need simple faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ; we need to wear a righteousness which is not our own but Christ's so that we can stand before God not condemned but accepted. What a wonderful thing that is!

You see this always gives us defence against an accusing conscience. This gives us a defence against the slanderous attacks of Satan, our adversary.

What is God saying to us here? He is saying have you given your life back to God in Jesus Christ? If so you own the breastplate of righteousness.

And then we of course ask ourselves the question, are we wearing it?

Sibylle and each of my children will tell you that one of my behavioural characteristics is to buy or be given something new but to leave it stored in a cupboard, in a safe place or even on the living room table which generally means it does not get damaged and sometimes not even properly unwrapped but misses the point of the purchase or the present which was to give me something valuable and necessary which I would appreciate, benefit from and **use**.

I am sure you see the point I am making. If we own the breastplate, that is to say if we have given our lives to the Lord, asked His forgiveness and turned away from wrongdoing then it is kind of obvious that we should wear the breastplate isn't it.

What does it actually mean to wear the breastplate of righteousness? It simply means to keep on trusting the gospel, to keep on trusting that it is Jesus' righteousness which qualifies me for heaven and which saves me from condemnation.

It means that I no longer believe in myself. It means that I no longer rest in myself. It means that I no longer have to boast about myself. It means that I no longer have to be dishonest about myself or suggest to people that I'm better than I am, because I'm not. So let him who boasts boast in the Lord.

You see, it's Jesus—and his righteousness, which is the protection against all of the onslaughts.

One of the great onslaughts of the Evil One is to get us to look at ourselves rather than to look at Christ.

So let us be protected against Satan by owning and wearing the breastplate of righteousness.

The righteousness that is required of us is not one that we can produce, but when we rest in the righteousness that is ours in Jesus, the work of the Spirit of God then transforms us to the image of the Lord Jesus from one degree of glory to another. We develop in practice amongst other things a character of integrity.

The righteousness of Christ given to us and the righteous character that we demonstrate in our new life in Christ, the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, are bound together in an impenetrable breastplate.

Our Prayers today are led by Beccy:

"Heavenly Father,
We gather again this morning to bring to you first of all our deep love and gratitude. We know just how much you love us and want what is best for us, even though we might not see it that way at first. We set our hearts on certain aspects of our lives and feel disappointed and confused when certain things don't go the way we expected. I wonder how hurt you feel when we do things you, sometimes with little or no thought of you at all. Help us Lord to become more like you every day, to learn to love our neighbours, even if they are not the easiest of people to love. When we are feeling a bit lost and troubled, let us remember that you were always straight there with us, your arms outstretched, waiting to comfort and guide us. How wonderful is that to have a heavenly father who loves us so deeply. We don't need to ever feel alone or scared, you are just a breath we don't need an appointment or an invitation, we don't even need to know exactly what to say, how to ask, how to explain to you

what we really want to say, because you know our hearts and what we are feeling right at that particular time.

We also come before you, Heavenly Father, with our worries and concerns for our world. There is still terrible fighting a lot of lives going on in Ukraine and Russia. Families are being separated and torn apart. Children being separated from their parents and siblings. Families having to depend on others peoples kindness and hospitality in these frightening times. Children missing schooling or going to school in a strange country with different sets of rules and such. Please Lord we pray for softening the hearts of the people in power in these war-torn countries. We pray for the government to change their attitudes and opinions. We pray every day for no more blood to be shared, for a miracle to stop these wars. We offer our thanks to you, Heavenly Father, for the aid workers and charities that work endlessly and often in various dangerous conditions to support these victims. We thank you for Brian and Jackie Chilvers and people like them, who work tirelessly and continually to give their support with no thought to their own safety.

We also bring to you our concerns for the state of the NHS. We pray for help for people waiting for operations and treatments. We hear on the news of people who have been waiting as long as three years for their treatment to be completed. This is so frightening for people, especially vulnerable people and people who live alone. So much correspondence today is done via telephone or letter that is not very clear to the ordinary layman. They can't get the treatment they need from their local hospital and are having to go to other hospitals like Burnley or Preston or Blackpool. Transport is so difficult to obtain that lots of people are giving up on trying to get the help they need. We do know that hospitals have to prioritise the most needy therefore we need to feel confident in our GPs. We just pray for help for the NHS, we pray for stability and fairness for the nursing staff. We pray for follow-up care after operations. We pray that appointments won't keep getting cancelled till patients are losing their confidence and getting depressed.

Oh Lord, we do know how very blessed we are, and as I said at the start of my prayer, how wonderful it is to know how much we are loved by you. We bring before you now the people who are not so blessed. Lonely people who have no one to talk to and give some comfort and are very frightened of what their future holds for them. People, adults and children, who live with an abusive partner or parent or sibling and don't know who to go to, to get help and support. We pray for people who are suffering from depression, and, or neglect. Often the cause of this being unemployment and lack of confidence.

We pray for our youngsters in school and are thankful for their teachers. They have so many restrictions now that it must be so difficult to keep the discipline without overstepping the mark. For some children this may be the only place they know, that will teach them manners and equality and build their confidence and help them to love themselves, as well as building friendships and obedience and manners.

Lastly Lord we pray for each other, we pray for our church family here at Bethesda and we pray for our personal families. We thank you for each other, for the love and friendship we share. We thank you for Alec our pastor and for our deacons, each and everyone, and thank you for their love and dedication. We pray for all in our

congregation that need an extra hug at this particular time. Those who are not well, those who have lost a loved one or are nursing a loved one. We know that you are with us always and especially at all times of need. We pray that any in our family who do not share our love for you will come to know you as we do. Thank you Heavenly Father, in Jesus name. Amen."

We are invited to sing again, this time a Hymn written by Charles Wesley
"Soldiers of Christ arise and put your armour on"

Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armour on,
strong in the strength which God supplies thro' his eternal Son.
Strong in the Lord of hosts, and in his mighty pow'r,
who in the strength of Jesus trusts is more than conqueror.

Stand then in his great might, with all his strength endued;
but take, to arm you for the fight, the panoply of God.
Leave no unguarded place, no weakness of the soul;
take ev'ry virtue, ev'ry grace, and fortify the whole.

To keep your armour bright, attend with constant care;
still walking in your Captain's sight, and watching unto prayer.
From strength to strength go on; wrestle and fight and pray;
tread all the pow'rs of darkness down, and win the well-fought day.

AUTHORS: Charles Wesley, Edward Woodall Naylor CCLI SONG # 1871969
Words: Public Domain Music: Public Domain, CCL No 5664

Alec concludes his Message with part 3 THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Here is today`s quiz question. Who said, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth? I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matthew 10:33)

How then can Paul speak in Ephesians 6:15 about having our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of grace?

Paul says, "You know, you were formerly alienated from God, and you were hostile in your minds." (Col. 1:21)

As you read through Ephesians, you see that Paul is making it perfectly clear: Jesus is our peace. It is not that there is peace in religion or there is of itself peace in anything that we might do but this peace is found in Jesus, that he was making peace by his blood shed on the cross.

Many men and women today are searching desperately for peace within, but with no real consideration of the need for peace with God.

Gospel shoes provide stability, mobility, and adaptability.

1) We need shoes that give us stability in our faith. We need to know about the peace of God and how we can enter into it and how we can obtain it; that it is given to us through the death of Jesus Christ God`s only Son. But we don`t just need to know ABOUT it, we need to

experience it, to live in it and to share it. We need the stability that these shoes give us; we need to experience that they prevent us from slipping and sliding and also from falling.

We are probably familiar with these words in Jude 24-25? "To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."

Remember my almost stumbling in Frankfurt airport station. HE is able to keep us from falling. We need shoes, the shoes of peace, which give us stability in our life and walk with the Lord.

2) We need shoes that give us mobility to share our faith. If someone jumps in the canal I don't take off my shoes, jump in and try to get them out; I leave that to the divers or others. But if I did and you were there you would see that I very often wear two different socks, one on the left and one on the right foot. But just imagine I needed to have the shoes on to get quickly to a rescue situation and I spent the first half hour after I got the emergency message just in selecting a suitable combination of specially coloured socks so that I really felt I had the right image for the job. It is not that I am red-green colour blind or anything like that. But the priority is the shoes. Those are what we need to reach people in need. Do we have the readiness of the gospel of peace? Is that what we are ready and able to present with our words and with our lives?

We need to put on the gospel shoes, to move through our communities to proclaim the salvation of peace with God.

Let's look very briefly at Mark 1:35-39: "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. Simon and his companions searched for Him; they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for you." He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons."

Maybe you see the needs of Galligreaves, Bank Top, Wensleyfold and the immediate areas but don't live here. Jesus is living here, Jesus is working here and Jesus is being worshipped here, right here. Are we mobile?

We need shoes that give us the mobility which is needed to share our faith.

3) We need shoes that give us adaptability in our growth as believers and as a church. God's Word does God's work by God's Spirit in the lives of those who encounter Him. But we need to be adaptable. Not by changing the Word of God, not by changing the gospel as we literally saw last week, not by trying to rev up some kind of super spirit; no we rely on God's Holy Spirit to open the hearts of men and women and move in and through our fellowship.

Adaptability still has to be within the framework of our core of beliefs, within the limits that God sets for us. Then we are truly free.

To summarise, we need to be fitted out with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. The Greek word used here by Paul is *hetoimasia*, which means readiness, preparation or firmness.

“Gospel shoes” give us stability to remain firm in the faith; they give us mobility to go and proclaim Christ; and they give us adaptability to the needs of others for the sake of Christ.

They enable us to stand securely, and then to be able to move quickly.

Are we stable, are we mobile, and are we adaptable?

We come to our Final hymn, which is displayed on the screen at Bethesda, sung alone by Kristyn Getty “He will hold me fast”. It begins and ends with a quiet violin and piano duet, Be still my soul (Finlandia)

When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast;
When the tempter would prevail, He will hold me fast.
I could never keep my hold through life’s fearful path;
for my love is often cold; He must hold me fast.
He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast;
for my Saviour loves me so, He will hold me fast.

Those He saves are His delight, Christ will hold me fast;
precious in His holy sight, He will hold me fast.
He’ll not let my soul be lost; His promises shall last;
bought by Him at such a cost, He will hold me fast.
He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast....

For my life He bled and died, Christ will hold me fast;
Justice has been satisfied; He will hold me fast.
raised with Him to endless life, He will hold me fast
'til our faith is turned to sight when He comes at last!

AUTHORS: Words: vv. 1-2 Ada Habershon (1861-1918), Public Domain. Alt. words, new words (v.3), and music: Matthew Merker
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaKuSieDNbU>

We say together in conclusion:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

(Judith asked to say a few words following the service, saying she had been privileged to share with Beryl and Brian in a final Communion Service, and had felt the sense of peace that filled his room, so much so that the staff felt he was “in a holding room of utter peace”. She reminded the fellowship of Beryl’s own vulnerability, asking them to be sensitive to her welfare when they attended the Thanksgiving Service on Friday, suggesting that perhaps hugs from the heart would be appropriate on this occasion, but reminding all that we are indeed being held fast.)

