

*Are you coming Michael? Yeah I'm coming.... Just wait until I get my boots on.....*

*In St George, you don't get too far without your boots on, hey? Too many goat-heads<sup>i</sup> and bull-heads<sup>ii</sup> about for that. Even so, when we're getting ourselves ready, the very last thing that we usually do, is to put our boots on.*

But if you were a soldier on the front-line – even when you sleep, you've got your boots on. A soldier on the front line, is in a constant state of readiness....

When it comes to the armour of God, probably the least appreciated, and it might seem like the least spectacular piece of the armour, are the shoes (or the sandals)... The shoes symbolise our “readiness”.

... But readiness for what????

Some bible versions put it as “readiness to stand firm<sup>iii</sup>”.

Others put it as “readiness to proclaim the gospel”<sup>iv</sup>. Some put it as “preparedness by the gospel”<sup>v</sup>.

But all the Bible really says is **having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace**. It doesn't actually specify what that readiness is.... We know where the readiness comes from – from the gospel of peace... – but readiness for what?

Well let me ask you, “What does a **soldier** have to be ready for?”

- To stand firm against the enemy????...
- To fight??? (implied)

A soldier has to be ready for whatever he is ordered to do – it's readiness to obey – readiness to serve... And to do so, unquestioningly...

*After the floods, when we were cleaning up at Warrawee, I saw something happen that I found really amusing. We were working with the army. There was a Lieutenant and a Sergeant, and a bunch of privates and lance corporals and corporals. And about half way through the day, I noticed an officer had a private following him wherever he went. And this just went on and on. About 2 steps behind. When the officer stopped, he stopped. When the officer changed direction, he changed direction....*

*Anyway, eventually, the officer did a quick U-turn and almost ran into him. And he said, "What are you doing?" "Sir, you told me to follow you with this", and he held up some item he was carrying for the officer. And the lieutenant said, "Are you still doing that?" "Yes sir."*

*He'd obviously forgotten that he had this poor private following him. "Very Good. Um, Now, go over and help those fellows over there"*

*But he never chastised him – you see he couldn't. Because that soldier had been doing, exactly what he was trained to do. When his superior gave him an order, he would begin carrying out that order immediately, and he would continue to do it, until he was told to stop. That's what it meant for him to be a soldier under a Commanding Officer.*

And as disciples of Jesus Christ, part of **our** spiritual armour, is a readiness / a willingness / a preparedness – to follow

God's orders – to obey them immediately; to follow them unquestioningly; and to serve Him gladly...

That's readiness....

When I did the Bible Study "Experiencing God", written by Henry Blackaby – that's when I began to truly understand 'readiness'....

He asked the question:

*Do you think God might call you to a costly adventure of faith? (Yes / No)*

And of course, He calls **all** of us to a costly adventure of faith.

Then he asked:

*How will you respond to God when He calls you to a costly commitment? (Yes, Lord! / No, that costs too much.)*

And we had to make the decision.

And then he said:

*You may think that the last question is a little premature. Not really. That is what the Lordship of Christ is all about. You should be able to answer the last question without knowing anything about what God may call you to. Your whole life should be lived with the attitude of "Lord, whatever you may ask of me today or in the future, my answer is YES!" Come to the place in your life where you are willing to surrender ALL to Him.<sup>vi</sup>*

Readiness, is to make that commitment to God – “Lord, the answer is ‘yes’ – whatever the order may be – whatever the direction – whatever the commandment – even before you give it, my answer is “YES”.

So, when you say, “Michael, I want you to serve in this way; I want you to go to this place; I want you to give up this possession; I want you to give up your life for me....”, I don’t have to even think about it, because I’ve already said “Yes”.

- Yes, I will go
- Yes, I will stay
- Yes, I will share the good news
- Yes, I will serve
- Yes, I will give
- Yes, I will sacrifice
- Yes, I will stand
- Yes, I will love
- Yes, I will forgive
- Yes, I will suffer
- Yes, I will die...
- Yes, I will obey – whatever you command

Just let me know whatever it is, Lord, and the answer is “Yes”.

That’s what readiness is – readiness to obey, even before you know what the order is.

Now, I want you to notice where this readiness comes from...

*I’ve been working as a minister and a pastor now, for 10 years. And I’m going to give you an honest truth about one of*

*the biggest struggles and biggest burdens, that a pastor carries.... – it's how to get the flock motivated... - not so we can just get things done, for the sake of 'doing stuff' – but so that the whole congregation – not just a few – are using their physical talents and their spiritual Gifts, in the service of God. – Because this is important – it's important for the growth of the church, and it's important for the spiritual development of each member of the congregation. You're not going to grow in God, unless you're serving Him (with all of your gifts and talents)...*

And I've watched the way different church leaders try to motivate their people (and I've been there myself). It's very tempting to use guilt, to shame people into active service: *"Come on, if this church is going to be effective, we've all got to be working"*.

*This Church is like a game of football - 26 men on the field, desperately in need of rest, and a thousand people in the grand-stands, desperately in need of the exercise!*

And some of you may have been motivated to serve because you've been shamed into it; or maybe you serve because you feel you might be letting somebody else down; or maybe you feel it's your duty...

The Pentecostals have a different way of motivating the flock – it's called "flattery". –You get people to do stuff by giving them the big "pump-me-up"... *You're so great; you're so awesome; God's put it on my heart that you would do this so well. – you're such an amazing man of God... And people step up because they feel really good about themselves.*

And so some people serve because they feel guilty, or they feel bad about themselves – they're shamed into it, And some people are motivated because they feel really good about themselves – because somebody's appealed to their pride, and that's what drives them to keep going...

Here's an idea.... What about if we were to serve God, because we feel really good about God???

The shoes of readiness, comes from the gospel of peace. It's not guilt; it's not shame; it's not duty; it's not the pump-me-up, feel good ego trip.... – It is valuing so highly, the gospel of peace – it's feeling so good about God and what He has done – that readiness becomes a very natural response to God's grace... It's feeling so good about God, that you would do anything for Him, the moment He asks.

That's the readiness of the Gospel of Peace...

In the opening chapters, as Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, he was reminding them of just how much their status had changed, through Christ... Before Christ, they **were** God-forsaken and good for nothing. But now, the gospel – the good news, is that through Christ, that's all changed – We've been brought near. We once were cut off from God, and excluded from His company – but not any more...

And when we realise, just how **amazing** this transformation is:

- That we've left darkness and entered light
- That we've left death and entered life

- That we were strangers to God, but now, we're in a loving relationship with Him
- That we were objects of wrath, but now we're a new creation
- When we realise that we, together, as the church, are not incidental, but we're **integral** to God's purposes

We should start to feel pretty good about God.. And readiness to obey in God's service, flows as a natural response to His amazing grace.

When we began this little sub-series on God's armour a few weeks ago, I said we were going to concentrate on the spiritual significance of each of the pieces of armour. Right'o, well what's the spiritual significance of readiness??? We're in a battle of good vs. evil – a battle, not against flesh and blood – but against the principalities and powers – against Satan and his demons.

When God leads us to serve Him in some way, Satan wants us to say “No”, or because the devil is very much into half-truths, to say, “Not yet” (a lack of commitment)

But what we have to understand, is when God speaks – that is God's timing.

When God gives us an order – when God leads us to serve – It's very tempting sometimes, to use delaying tactics...

- *Lord, I know you want me to teach RE, but I really don't have time at the moment.*
- *Lord, I know you want me to invite so-and-so to church, but I just don't think the time's right...*

- *Lord, I know I should share my faith with my work mate, but I feel a bit awkward about it at the moment – maybe a bit later when I know more...*
- *Lord, I know you want me to dig deep every week, to tithe to you, by supporting ministries and missions... but I really need to pay this loan off, before I start giving any money away...*

And so we delay. Delayed obedience has another name – does anyone know what it is? – disobedience.

A lot of us Christians are all dressed up with the armour of God:

- We believe the truth;
- We have the righteousness of Christ, and we do our best to live a righteous life;
- We depend on the salvation of God;
- We know the word of God; we study His word – we love the word of God;
- We have faith, and we trust in God...

And that's all very good and nice.... It's like they're all dressed up and no place to go...

Only there is a place to go – we're just not going there – it's called mission – And God is ordering us to mission, but we haven't had the readiness or the willingness to obey.....

And **there**, is the spiritual battle.

Remember, just how much God has done for you. Value, the good news, of the new life you have in Christ. Be excited about it, and ready to share it, And be ready to obey.

My prayer is that we would never be a congregation where we have to put the guilt-trip on one-another, or shame one-another into serving God... And probably worse than that – I never want us to become a congregation where we do the big personal pump-me-up, to appeal to each-other’s pride and vanity, to get people serving God...

My prayer, is that God would do His mighty work in us – that He would make us more and more aware of the wonder of His salvation – that we would love God more and more – so much more so, that we would say it and mean it, “Yes, Lord”. Whatever you say – whatever you command – today, or in the future – the answer is already, and undoubtedly, “yes”...

That’s readiness. And with a church filled with this kind of readiness, Satan will not stand.

Wouldn’t the angels in heaven rejoice, to see the children of God, filled with that kind of readiness...

Without readiness, we are weak and vulnerable. The church will never be strong, unless we have readiness. And if you’re just serving out of compulsion or because you’ve had a pump-me-up, you’re in the constant danger of burn-out.

Questions????

---

<sup>i</sup> Caltrop  
<sup>ii</sup> Spiny Emex  
<sup>iii</sup> NCV  
<sup>iv</sup> NRSV  
<sup>v</sup> NKJV

---

<sup>vi</sup> Experiencing God, Henry Blackaby. Lifeway Press Nashville, Tennessee. 1990. Pages 139-140.