

BETTER THAN KEVLAR

35th in a Series on Ephesians called, "Messages to the Misfits"
Ephesians 6:15-16

One day when Laurie and I were on vacation we decided to do a little snorkeling. We were standing in waist deep water putting our fins on. It was a bit difficult because the waves kept pushing us around. Laurie got hers on first, but when she put them on she thought she had kicked a rock with the tip of her fin. But that seemed odd because the bottom where we were standing was sandy. She ducked her head under the water and immediately came back up and said, "It wasn't a rock. It was a turtle! There's a turtle here." That was surprising because we were in shallow water. Plus, there were quite a few other people around, and usually turtles attract attention. But sure enough, there was a sea turtle right there by us. He began to swim toward deeper water, so we followed him. He got out into an area where it was deeper and where there were some rocks, and I saw him do something I've never seen a turtle do. He swam to the bottom by a large rock and began burrowing. He tried to dig so he could hide under that rock. I figured he was trying to get away from the lady who kicked him. But what it really appeared was he was tired of being a celebrity, tired of all these weird humans who followed him everywhere he went and he just wanted to get away from them. He just wanted a little peace and quiet.

We left him alone, but his effort was not successful because people wanted to see the celebrity and they wouldn't go away. I thought of him when I was working on this talk because we all have something in common with that turtle. We would all like to have a little peace. Frederick Buchner wrote in his book, *Secrets In The Dark* that every human is seeking peace. He said it is the treasure we would trade all other treasures for. But peace is in short supply. One thing that makes it so scarce is that we are in a spiritual war. By definition war means the absence of peace. There are times we'd just like the enemy to leave us alone. We're tired of fighting, and what we'd like to do is go hide under a rock. But it won't work any better for us than it did for our friend the turtle. But today we are going to look at some resources God gives us that are way better than hiding under a rock. Let's look at Ephesians 6:15-16.

WE NEED A DEFENSE AGAINST FEAR

We have seen that Satan uses doubt and temptation as two key components of his campaign against us. A close relative of doubt and temptation is fear, which Satan tries to use against us in a wide variety of ways. In particular doubt and fear create a vicious cycle. The more we doubt, the more we will fear. But the more we fear, the more we will doubt. They feed on each other in a destructive cycle.

In the unfortunate movie *The Phantom Menace*, at one point Yoda says to his protege, Anakin Skywalker, "Fear is the path to the dark side." Sure enough, Anakin's fear drives him down that path and he becomes Darth Vader. Fear makes us irrational and leads us to behave in ways that are ungodly or hurtful or even self-destructive.

There was a bus driver who was given a new route. At one of his stops a truly intimidating man stepped onto the bus. This guy was enormous. He barely could fit through the door because he was so tall and his shoulders were so wide. He had an intimidating scowl that matched his size. As he got on he said to the driver, “Big John don’t have to pay.” The driver was about half the man’s size. What was he going to do? Try to stop him? The man could squish him like a bug. Big John just walked to the back of the bus and sat down. It galled the driver, but what could he do about it? The next day Big John showed up and did the same thing. After days of this the bus driver was so frustrated he couldn’t take it anymore. He had to do something about it. He began going to the gym and working out like crazy. He took karate and boxing lessons. After a few months he had gotten in incredible shape and had become confident in his abilities in both boxing and karate. The time had come. Sure enough, the next day Big John showed up, said, “Big John don’t have to pay,” then sat down. The driver was ready. He was a little nervous, but he had prepared for this. He got out of his seat, walked back to where the man was sitting and said, “And just why does Big John not have to pay?” The man said, “Because Big John has a bus pass.”

That’s what fear can do to us, and unfortunately, all of us have our fears. Many of them are totally unnecessary. Maybe you fear being struck by lightning. Your odds of that happening are one in 2.3 million. You have a much better chance of being hit by a meteorite. That has a one in 700,000 chance. People freak out about being attacked and killed by a shark, but the odds of that happening are 1 in 300 million! Well, yes, but if I never go in the ocean the odds are zero! But your chance of being injured while mowing the lawn is one in only 3,623. Just when you thought it was safe to go back on the lawn. You want to be afraid? Did you know that more than 36,000 Americans die from the flu every year?

Whatever your fears, there is a good chance that they are keeping you from being or doing what God would like you to be or do. They can even cause us to disobey God directly, because obeying him is just too scary. It is good to remember that God wants you to experience life to the fullest. Jesus said he came for that very reason. Our enemy wants the exact opposite. He wants to steal, kill and destroy. So the irony is that while we sometimes are afraid to boldly obey God because we think it might lead to loss or pain, it is in obeying God that we will find life. Meanwhile if we fall for the enemy’s line we will end up with exactly what he wants for us, which is loss of life, pain and destruction.

Fortunately, God has given us some armor that can protect us against the enemy’s attacks, including the fear that he wants to use to ruin us. We will see two big ones today as we look at Ephesians 6:15-16.

WE SHOULD PUT ON THE GOSPEL SHOES

Paul says we should put on our feet the readiness of the gospel of peace. The term translated “readiness” is sometimes translated “preparation” or “foundation.” So we’re talking about something that is foundational, something crucial for us as a basis for life.

It is appropriate to think about a foundation being associated with feet. Back around 2008 you might recall there was a professional football team in San Diego. That team had one of the best players in the NFL. His name was Ladanian Tomlinson. He was a running back who had the ability to take over games, and often did. But he had one year where he was not the same player. He did not display the abilities that he was known for. He had an injury. It was an injury that doesn't sound like an injury. It was called turf toe. Turf toe? That's it? That doesn't sound like a real injury like a torn knee ligament, a broken clavicle, or a high ankle sprain. But turf toe is a real injury and it can be debilitating. It is a sprain of the ligaments in the joint of your big toe. And the Tomlinson incident informs us that when there's a problem with your feet, even with a toe, you're not going anywhere.

Everyone knows that for soldiers, healthy feet are essential. A soldier who can't walk or stand is not going to be able to fight. Being an effective soldier begins with having healthy feet. By referring to the feet and using the term "readiness" or "foundation" Paul was telling us that this is a matter of first priority. It has to do with basic ability to stand and fight. Paul says the thing that is crucial to that ability is that which comes from the gospel of peace. Let's think for a moment about peace.

What is peace? For Paul the background of the word "peace" goes back to a familiar Hebrew word, shalom. That word encompassed a great deal more than a lack of war. It means wholeness, health, soundness. Except it was broader than merely personal wholeness. It certainly meant that, but it essentially meant all was right in the world. For there to be shalom means all is as it should be. Theologian Alvin Plantinga wrote in his book, *Not The Way It's Supposed To Be*, that the Hebrew prophets looked forward to an age of shalom, a new age in which "human crookedness would be straightened out, rough places made plain...People would work in peace...all humans would be knit together in brotherhood and sisterhood...All nature and all humans would look to God, walk with God, lean toward God and delight in God."

That is clearly not the way things are now. In the world now the strong oppress the weak, the rich prey on or take advantage of the poor, people and nations go to war against others to get what they want. Think back to your school days. Didn't you know a kid that was often the target of hazing? Matt Woodley, a director of *Christianity Today* and a pastor, recalls a boy named Gary at his elementary school in Minnesota. Gary was tall and skinny, hyperactive, had a high squeaky voice and he was socially inept. All together that made him the perfect target for ridicule. Kids would tease him mercilessly in an attempt to get him to go into one of his characteristic moments of freaking out. Matt mostly tried to stay out of the way. But one day he saw Gary surrounded by six boys who were teasing him and throwing snowballs at him. He knew he had to do something. So he stepped next to Gary and told the boys to stop or they'd have to deal with him. He said he and Gary both got beaten up that day, but he felt he did the right thing.

You likely knew at least one kid like Gary. I remember Mumford. I don't even recall his first name, but poor Mumford was constantly teased and ridiculed. The world shouldn't be that way. Why is it

the way it is? Is this just how God made things? No, it wasn't originally this way. It has been this way ever since the mutiny in Eden. Do you remember what happened there? The first humans decided they would go their way and not God's way. They rebelled against him. That action disrupted the ideal relationship they had with God. Suddenly they wanted to hide from him and weren't happy when he showed up. But they also had problems with each other. Adam tried to pin the blame for everything on Eve, who no doubt appreciated his cowardly blame shifting. On top of that, their relationship with nature itself was disrupted, and would now be full of hardship, pain and death. All was not right in the world. The shalom of nature itself was shattered so much that Paul would later write that all of creation "groans" until it will someday be restored to its original shalom. The humans' act of rebellion shattered shalom with God, with themselves and even the shalom of nature. So here's the crucial point in all of this. All the lack of shalom began when the humans by their own choice became estranged from God. All of the lack of peace in the world can be traced right back to that root cause.

Everyone recognizes that everything is not as it should be. That's true in all of us as individuals, it's true in our relationships, it's true between nations, it's true even in nature itself. Laurie and I were talking with one of our neighbors yesterday. She has retired, but she told us she now wants to get a part time job doing something "fun." She said she absolutely does not want to work in retail. She did that once a few years back, and she said that dealing with people was horrible. She said that people were just awful. There was no shalom in that industry. So throughout recorded history there have been lots of attempts to correct the problem and bring about shalom. Go all the way back to Plato's Republic to find some of the earliest recorded thoughts on how to have a society characterized by peace. In the thousands of years since there have been countless philosophies on how to solve the problem, including Marxism, socialism, and various supposedly utopian communities.

We are infinitely more advanced technologically and scientifically. Technologies that have the potential for totally altering life such as nano robots, genome editing, brain mapping, generative adversarial networks and many others are exploding. Knowledge has increased dramatically. Experts say that human knowledge currently is doubling every 13 months. IBM claims that when the "Internet of Things" is fully built out human knowledge will double every 12 hours! We are more sophisticated and more educated than ever before. But there is no more peace now than in the past. We are as far from shalom as we have ever been, both individually and corporately. How is it possible that we know so much more, have come so far, and yet struggle with the same lack of peace that people have faced for thousands of years?

All of the countless philosophies, religions, and ideas over the past 5000 years have failed to create more peace. Ah but what we need is more and better education. You hear that a lot. Let's ask one question. Do you think that university faculties are typically mini utopias where there is pervasive shalom? Even the suggestion is laughable. Those highly educated people are as torn by strife, conflict and dissension as any other group of human beings. We have to remember what the cause of the problem was. Genesis 3 tells us that shalom was ruined when people were estranged from God.

That is the root of all the upheaval and turmoil in the world. The only way to restore shalom in our hearts, in relationships, even with creation, is to fix the root cause of disruption of peace.

That is what the Gospel of Christ does. It is intended to restore humans to a relationship with God, to end our estrangement from him. When that injury is healed, when the relationship with God is restored, then God's shalom, his peace, can begin flowing into us, flooding our lives with his peace. According to Judges 6:24 when God first called Gideon in a miraculous way, Gideon built an altar to God and called it Yahweh Shalom, "the Lord is peace." Romans 15:33 and 16:20 both call God "the God of peace." 2 Corinthians 13:11 says, "The God of love and peace will be with you."

One morning I noticed our sprinkler system was on at a time it usually doesn't run, but for some reason didn't think much about it. Nearly an hour later Laurie called to me and said, "Rick, our sprinklers are still running." I went outside and found that they indeed were running and had been for some time, and the front yard was flooded. I quickly went to the garage where the irrigation controls are and turned off the system. But the sprinklers kept running! Uh oh. Now what? I knew that there was a screw on the valve you can turn that will shut off the water, so I did that. That helped. The sprinklers stopped spraying, but now there was a jet of water jetting up from the valve itself, and there was nothing I could do to stop it. I had to go to the last resort, which was to turn off the valve from the water main to our property. Now no water was flowing from the water system to our property. That fixed the problem, but presented us with another. Now there was no water in our house. Try to take a shower, wash your hands, get a drink of water, and nothing came out. Our connection to water had been severed. Cut off from the water main, the source of water, and there was none available for any purpose. So think of peace as being like that water. God is the source of all shalom. He is the one who can create peace, in our hearts, in our relationships, even in the world. When we are cut off from him peace no longer flows. In the end, if a person is not connected to God, that individual will always lack true shalom. The only way to restore shalom is to reconnect us to its source.

Do you remember one of the great prophecies of Jesus from the prophet Isaiah? We hear it a lot during the Christmas season. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of...what?" Prince of peace! Do you remember what the angels said when they announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds? Luke 2:14 says they proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." Romans 5:1 concluded after Paul had explained how we can be declared righteous by God, reconnected to him by faith in Jesus Christ, "Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ always produces peace. If what we believe does not produce peace, it is not the Gospel of Christ. This is all too common, for many people, sometimes without even knowing it, substitute religion based on performance for the Gospel. Religion never produces peace.

It produces hypocrisy, pride, division and frustration, but never peace. **The true Gospel always produces peace.** If what you believe does not produce peace, then you are not believing the Gospel.

As Paul clearly stated in Romans 5:1 the gospel creates peace with God, which is absolutely foundational to all other peace. I will refer to an incident in Laurie's and my life that I've mentioned a number of times. It was our first argument as a married couple. It happened on our honeymoon. I don't need to go into the details, but I can tell you that there was a point at which I had made my case and Laurie had admitted that I was right. So the argument was over, right? I could tell from the silence in the car that all was not well. Laurie practically radiated unhappiness, and I could feel it. And I knew the unhappiness had to do with me. Something I had done had caused it. I remember to this day the feeling of unease that it created in me. I was not at peace because I knew I had done something that caused estrangement between the woman I love and me. It was unbearable. So I said, "What's wrong?" What was wrong was that I had hurt her in the way I treated her. I might have been right about the initial cause of the disagreement, but my treatment of her was hurtful. There was not going to be any peace in the car, and there certainly was not going to be any peace in my heart until I fixed that.

When we are estranged from God there will be that same sense of unease. It will be nearly unbearable and we will search for some way to ease the discomfort and pain of it. We will feel guilt and we will feel the absence of something we badly need, and that is that connection with God. We will lack that stamp of approval, that righteousness that we looked at a couple of weeks ago. But when we put on the Gospel of peace we know that we are forgiven completely. We know that we are given God's stamp of approval, we have his love and we have that connection with God that we were created to need. Peace begins to flow.

One thing that disturbs our peace is the fear of innumerable foul things that might happen to us in this world. You're in a doctor's office and he says the word "biopsy." That right there gets your attention because you know they don't do a biopsy just to help them understand why you are so phenomenally healthy. Then he explains what he's going to do. Wait, you're going to send a camera and a cutting tool up where and cut off a part of me in there? Oh no, I'm not going to snip off a part of you. I'm going to snip off 12 parts! You get a clue to how lacking in peace you are when you find out the day of the biopsy your blood pressure is about 30 points higher than normal. It's hard to be at peace when you fear something painful is about to happen. On top of that you fear that the result of it might be very bad news.

The problem for us is that there is no promise in the Bible that nothing bad will ever happen to us, that God will see to it that we have blessed lives with no real pain. There is no promise that prostate exams will be a walk in the park, never be a biopsy or bad news from said biopsy, and pregnancy will be as easy as eating apple pie. Quite the contrary, Jesus said, "in this world you will have troubles." So how are we supposed to have peace? Right now we are watching Michael and Carissa

go through the inevitable sleep deprivation that comes with having a baby. I've been reminded of an unexpected time in Laurie's and my life. We had gone through the baby stage and survived it. Our kids were sleeping solidly through the night, and so were we. They were 5 and 8 years old. At that point we bought the house we now have and moved into it. Oddly, in our brand new house our kids began waking up frightened during the night. We figured the change of location was enough to unsettle them. It wasn't that they would be awake all night long. But they'd wake up and couldn't go back to sleep unless Mom or Dad was there with them until they fell back asleep. It seemed like each night one would wake up once and the other would wake up twice, which meant that we were being awakened 3 times a night. We had to stay with them until they were sound asleep again, which could often take a while. The key to dealing with their fears was the presence of Mom or Dad. Nothing else would do, but that took care of the fears. It was only when those fears were calmed by a parent being there that they could rest. In our case, it is the presence of our Heavenly Father that calms our fears and gives us peace despite the uncertainty of the future. He reminds us that nothing will be wasted in our lives. He promises to give us the strength to deal with whatever comes, and he gives us the promise that in the end we have hope for joy and life like we've never known before.

Oswald Chambers said, "When you fear God, you fear nothing else. When you do not fear God, you fear everything else." The point is the Gospel of Christ is the good news of peace. It opens the flood gates that let God's shalom to flow into us, to flood our souls with it to such an extent that it flows into our relationships so we can begin to be at peace with other people, no matter what they may do, not matter what they are like. We are at peace with God, we are at peace about what will happen to us.

At this point you may be wondering about the obvious question. I've made the point that there have been countless attempts by various people and groups to experience shalom by all kinds of methods and philosophies and none of them have worked because they don't solve the root problem. You might object, but the Gospel of Christ has been around for 2000 years, and couldn't you say the same about it? Are all followers of Jesus filled with God's peace? No. Is the church a beacon of peace to the world, a place where the unity of Eden prior to the Fall is found in abundance? Honestly no, that's not true. Most of the time churches are full of conflict and lack of peace. So how can the Gospel be any different?

Remember what Paul said in these verses. He taught that we need to put on the shoes of the Gospel of peace. That is a command, and as such we can choose to not obey it. We can fail to put on the Gospel of peace, and when we do, we do not experience that shalom. In Colossians 3:15 Paul wrote, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." Unfortunately, we can choose to not let the peace of Christ rule. We can choose to live out religion or we can choose to live for our own kingdom, and when we do that the peace of Christ does not rule in our hearts. When we put on the true gospel of grace, when we let the peace of Christ rule, we will experience shalom. God's peace will flood our hearts, our lives, our relationships. It is guaranteed. But we always have the option of choosing not

to live by and believe the gospel. We should not be surprised when we do that to end up lacking peace.

When we live by the gospel, the peace it always produces will enable us to resist the enemy's attempts to destroy us with fear and turmoil. The enemy will tell us God couldn't possibly love us, we could not be his children because we are such a mess. He tells us that God isn't going to help us in this world and that all these horrible things are going to happen to us, so we'd better forget him and look out for ourselves. We can put on the gospel of peace, and it tells us that we are his children, God does love us, he is with us and will be eternally. He tells us repeatedly, "Do not fear." Jesus promised us in John 14:27, "My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

WE SHOULD WIELD THE SHIELD

The weapon in our arsenal that is key to experiencing the peace of the Gospel is faith. On August 9 this year Providence, Rhode Island, police officer Matthew McGloin, a member of the city's violent crimes task force, along with his partner, approached 19-year-old Tyrone Robinson on a street in that city in the middle of the afternoon. Suddenly Robinson pulled out a gun and opened fire on the officers. One of his bullets struck McGloin in the chest. His partner was not hit and he immediately returned fire. McGloin was taken to the hospital where he was examined and released that evening. The bullet that hit him struck his ballistic vest, and that saved his life.

Notice verse 16. It tells us to take up the "shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." The flaming arrows of the evil one are his bullets. They are the attacks he launches against us. This verse says we have something like bulletproof armor, only it is phrased in first century terms. It is a shield, and it can defeat "all the flaming arrows" of the enemy. In other words, it can protect us from everything the enemy can launch at us! It is universally effective. It is the perfect defense. The enemy has nothing to counter it.

This shield is faith. Well that's not very helpful because I don't have a lot of faith. Do you know that you exercise faith every day? I am going to show you two similar pieces of paper. They are the same size and resemble each other in several ways. One says it is a note from the US worth \$20, the other claims to be a similar note except it says it is worth \$1 million. I know for certain that you just laugh at the million-dollar bill, but you accept the \$20 bill as real and actually worth \$20. But is it? It's just a piece of paper with some ink on it, really little different than the other bill. Is that piece of paper intrinsically worth \$20? No, it is only worth \$20 because you and everyone else believes it to be worth \$20. You exercise faith that it is actually worth what it claims for itself, and for no other reason. We live with faith like that every day without even thinking about it. When you drive down El Camino Real at 55 miles per hour, you exercise faith that someone coming in the opposite direction is not going to swerve into your lane and hit you head on. We exercise faith every day of our lives.

Paul tells us we can defeat the enemy by putting faith in God. The key is not how strong our faith is, but how big our God is. It is not our strong faith in God that gives us peace, but our little faith in a strong God that gives us peace. We trust that his truth claims are reliable, that he really does love us even when it doesn't always feel like it, that he has declared us righteous when we know that we don't deserve that, that he can and will give us peace, and that there is hope for us, now and for eternity. It means exercising faith that God is still good, he still loves us, and somehow is sovereign in the events of our lives even when we don't understand it.

In his book *The Cure For The Troubled Heart*, Ron Mehl wrote, “what a blessed sense of relief and release we feel when we truly understand and acknowledge that all of life is in God's hands.” In his book, *God Works The Night Shift*, he wrote, you may take comfort in the fact that nothing in your life is wasted.” I know, that all sounds like things pastors say to try to make us feel better when it sure feels like God has abandoned us. Ron Mehl was a pastor. But he didn't deal in untrafficked truth. By faith he lived in the reality of the things he wrote. He was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of 36 and told the most optimistic possibility for him was that he might live another 5 or 6 years. When he wrote those words he was dealing with leukemia. He died in 2003 at the age of 59.

In his book, *The Christian Soldier*, Martin Lloyd Jones wrote, “This is God's battle. We are given the privilege of being in it and fighting as individual soldiers, but God's honor is involved in it all. He cannot allow this to fail because his character, his glory, and his honor are involved at every point.” We must always remember that **faith means believing that the battle belongs to Almighty God.**

One of ancient Israel's problems was when they were faced with an intimidating enemy, they started looking around for some ally to help them. They failed to believe that God could actually fight on their behalf and win the battle in this world. One exception is found in 2 Chronicles 20. Judah was invaded by the combined forces of 3 nations from the east. They were described in verse 1 as a “vast army.” Jehoshaphat, the king, wielded the shield of faith. His people were freaking out and saying, “What are we going to do? We're all going to die!” But the king gathered the people at the temple and prayed. He began by praying in verse 6, “Lord, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you.” Then in verse 12 he says, “we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us.” But listen to his last words of his prayer, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” They trusted God, wielding the shield of faith. God caused the allies to turn on each other, and they annihilated each other. Judah won the battle without firing a shot, because God fought the battle for them.

Satan is going to attack with doubt, fear, temptation, trying to distract us, batter us, intimidate us. Faith in God's truth, in his character, in his power, in his goodness and his love, is the shield that will protect us from every attack the enemy tries against us.

We should learn from Jehoshaphat. His response to a frightening situation that was way beyond his ability to control or solve, was to praise God. One of the most powerful weapons we have in our arsenal is by faith to praise God. To declare him, as that king did, the one who rules over all the kingdoms of the nation, to proclaim that power and might are in his hand, and therefore no one and nothing can withstand him.

CONCLUSION

In 2 Kings 6 once again Israel was threatened by an enemy, this time it was the king of Aram. But that king began to get really ticked off because every time he laid a trap to ambush Israel's forces they saw it coming and avoided it. After it kept happening he came to the obvious conclusion. There was an Israeli mole planted somewhere among his top advisors. Enraged, he started a mole hunt. He asked, "Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?" Only there was no mole. God had been telling the prophet Elisha every move Aram made. When the king of Aram heard that was going on his next move was obvious. Have to kill Elisha. They found out he was in a town called Dothan and sent a strong force to go kill him. They surrounded the city at night. Elisha's servant went out the next morning and was shocked to see the place encircled by Aramean forces. He freaked. He said to Elisha, "What are we going to do?" In verses 16-17 Elisha said, "Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." That seemed crazy. At that point "those who are with us" consisted of Elisha and his assistant, a grand total of 2! Then he prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see. Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

Yes, but those are Bible stories. Stuff like that doesn't happen now, if they ever did, right? Let me tell you the story of John Paton. He and his wife, Mary, went as missionaries to the New Hebrides in the South Pacific. But his wife and their young son died, then he was attacked by hostile islanders and had to be rescued. He didn't give up. He eventually married again to Maggie, and they attempted to go to a different island in that chain. The captain of the ship that took them there tried desperately to dissuade them. He was certain if they went to the island, called Aniwa, they would be killed. But they persisted. When they arrived they camped on the beach. He wrote in his diary that every night he could see natives hiding in the bushes staring at them, a clear threat to their safety. But for some unknown reason they never attacked. Eventually the Patons were able to establish relations with the islanders, and had tremendous success. The entire tribe came to believe in Jesus. The Patons stayed there for 30 years. The day before they left the old chief, recalling the Patons' early days so many years before, said to him, "John, there is one thing I never asked you. Do you remember when you first came here and you camped on the beach?" Paton said he did. Then the chief asked, "What was that army that guarded you and your wife every night?" The battle belongs to our God. Let's put on the gospel of peace and carry the shield of faith, believing we can trust him. We do not know what to do, Lord, but our eyes are on you.