

## Chapter 4 – Feet Shod with the Preparation of the Gospel

Last year I completed the couch to 5k. Let me tell you, it wasn't easy. Not just because of my age, but mostly because I hadn't run for 10 years. I was so out of shape that the initial 30 seconds took everything I had just to push through. I didn't think I'd ever be able to do it, but somehow, I did.

A lot of persistence and a good pair of shoes go a long way when you're running a race. In fact, when I was looking for a good couch to 5k program, I couldn't help but notice that nearly every website I went to advised me to start with good shoes. Of course, I didn't listen at first, but that quickly changed when I realized the difference good footwear can make.

Footwear is designed with a purpose in mind. You don't wear snow shoes to the beach, and you wouldn't wear sandals in the snow. The same goes for a soldier preparing for battle. Combat boots are specifically designed to provide protection and stability. They're strong and sturdy and yet they're flexible enough for rugged terrain. They've got to be made of waterproof leather if they hope to withstand water and rocks.

In ancient times, Roman soldiers wore leather sandals known as "caligae." Caligae were heavy-duty sandals with hobnailed soles. The hobnails were hammered into the soles of the sandals to offer the soldiers extra grip much like the modern-day cleats worn by football players. In *Wars 6.1.8* Josephus, the Jewish Historian, writes, "... as Julian had shoes all full of thick and sharp nails as had every one of the other soldiers (caligae—cleats on the soles of shoes), so when he ran on the (smooth marble) floors of the temple, he slipped and fell down upon his back with a very great noise, which was made by his armor..."

Likewise, soldiers of faith must be ready for combat with the right pair of shoes. The right pair of shoes in this case is the gospel of peace. What better shoes could we ever hope to receive than that which is made by the Master. A gospel of peace. A beautiful gospel that brings the good news of God to the sinner. Your sins are forgiven. Your time of freedom has come. Man has been reconciled to God through His Son.

The Bible tells us to stand firm with our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The apostle Paul is telling us here to stand firm in our faith. Stand firm in the face of affliction. Don't waiver when you're tested and tried. Don't run when you're standing alone. Don't give up when the going is tough. Stand firm in the gospel of peace.

When you're feeling doubtful, give glory to God. When you're feeling afraid, give glory to God. When you're feeling discouraged give glory to God. Don't let your circumstances dictate the strength of your faith.

Acts Chapter 16 is a powerful lesson in faith. We see Paul and Silas stripped, severely beaten, and thrown into prison. But here's the interesting part in all this: Verse 25 tells us that around midnight, Paul and Silas were singing hymns and praying to God.

I stop at that verse in absolute awe of those men, and I realize they had something wonderful that the other prisoners didn't. They knew there was more to this life than the pain they were facing. They had faith in the gospel of peace.

Faith tells us that that eternal glory outweighs our momentary affliction by far. It reminds us that we have a home beyond the scope of this world, and points us straight to the salvation of God. Faith tells us to take our eyes off our problems today and to focus on the hope set before us.

Isaiah reminds us of the strength that comes to those who trust in the Lord as he writes,

*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31, KJV)*

We can learn from eagles when it comes to our trials, or more particularly when it comes to rising above them. Unlike humans, eagles can sense when a storm is approaching. Not only are they ready for it—they set their wings in such a way that they are lifted by the wind. They soar above while the storm rages below them.

To have our feet shod with the gospel of peace is to stand firm in our faith. It's truly knowing what we know. You can't defend something if you're still wavering on it. James 1:8 says, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

Here's the thing: when we truly know what we know, we're ready to defend what we know. In the same way, when we're armed with scripture we can draw from our faith. That's why the Bible tells us that the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It cuts through the lies that attack us and threaten to draw us away from the Lord.

We hear lies daily. Whether they're internal or external, Satan is doing his best to drag us down. His mission is to discourage us and draw us away from our faith. His tactics have a way of sucking the joy out of us until all that we're left with is a feeling of self-doubt and defeat.

Just knowing this makes me want to grab hold of scripture tighter than I ever have. I want to be like Jesus Who, while He was tempted, rebuked Satan's lies with the truth of God's Word. Why? Because He knew what He knew and was therefore ready to stand.

If you're not strong in your faith, you won't be strong in the fight. The Bible tells us that we're overcomers because of the power within us. We don't have to fight this battle alone. And we're not expected to fight this battle alone. We're merely vessels of His power and strength.

*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1 John 4:4, NIV)*

## Strengthened by Adversity

Adversity does one of two things. It either knocks us off our feet and leaves us feeling defeated, or we are strengthened by it. Let's look at 9 people (and one nation) who were strengthened by the winds of adversity:

- Joseph was thrown into a pit and sold into slavery.
- The Hebrews were enslaved for hundreds of years by the Egyptians.
- Pharaoh tried to kill Moses more than once.
- Samson was weak, humiliated, blind, and in bondage.
- Job lost everything including his children.
- God wrestled with Jacob and put his thigh out of joint before he called him, "Israel" (who prevails with God).
- Ruth lost her husband. She left behind her home, and her people.
- David was a murderer, and an adulterer. He lost his infant son.
- Peter denied Christ three times on the night of His death.
- Paul was stricken with blindness for 3 days.

### Pause and Reflect

Q. What were the sandals Roman soldiers wore made of?

Q. Who were singing hymns and praying in prison in the middle of the night?

Q. How do we rebuke Satan's lies?

Q. List some of the trials you have experienced in your life. After each one, mark down whether you think you were strengthened or defeated by it:

Q. What outweighs our momentary affliction?

Q. What does God promise to those who wait upon the Lord?

Q. How did Josephus describe the soles of the Roman soldiers' shoes?

### Fill in the Blanks:

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, \_\_\_\_\_ . Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not \_\_\_\_\_ .

(1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV)

Q. How do we stand firm in our faith?

Q. When was the last time you let Satan steal your joy? What happened? How should you have reacted instead?