

St. Paul likened the spiritual war of the Christian believer against the devil and his demons, with the worldly warfare. He depicted the spiritual armor with the Roman weapons known in his days.

The Apostle Paul applied the "whole armor of God" asking us to cover our chests with **the breastplate of righteousness** in order to protect the heart, girding the waist with **the belt of truth** to be ready for the fight, taking **the shield of faith** with which we will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; **the helmet of salvation** to protect our heads and minds from the evil thoughts; **the sword of the spirit**, which is the word of God to defend ourselves and in the meantime attack the enemies (Eph. 6:10-18).

Among the weapons he mentioned **the shoes**, saying, "And having **shod you feet with the preparation of the gospel of Peace**" (Eph. 6:15)

So, what is the significance of these shoes?

Christians are meant to be steadfast, active, moving, growing, progressing, running, ascending, consequently their feet are carefully provided for.

H.H. Pope Shenouda always says, "In your spiritual life, always run forward. If you couldn't run, then walk, and if you couldn't walk, creep. And if you couldn't creep then stand still but never stop or backslide."

David the Psalmist confirmed the same experience when he said, "**I will run the course** of your commandments ..." (Ps. 109: 32).

Again St. Paul also said, "**Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize?** Run in such a way that you may obtain it" (1Cor.9:24). And near the end of his great life he said, "The time of my departure is at hand. **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race**, I have kept the faith. Finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

Our feet are feeble in themselves, and need protection: the road also is rough, and hence they need the shoe which grace provides.

I. Let Us Examine the Shoes

They come from the Almighty Maker. The one who is skillful in all arts, and knows by experience what is wanted, since He Himself has journeyed through life's roughest ways.

They are made of excellent material: "the preparation of the Gospel of peace." Well seasoned, soft to wear, lasting long.

Peace with God as to the past, present and future.

Peace of full submission to the divine mind and will.

Peace with the Word and all its teachings.

Peace with one's inner-self, conscience, fears, desires.

Peace with our brethren in the church and family.

Peace with all mankind: "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceable with all men." (Rom. 12:18).

These shoes of such as none can make except the Lord, who both sends the gospel, and prepares the peace because He is the Prince of Peace.

They are such shoes as Jesus wore, and all the saints.

They are such as will never wear out; they are old, yet ever new; we may wear them at ages and in all places. It is impossible to dispense with them during our childhood, youth or old age. Also we cannot take them off and run our race without

them in any place and walk bare footed in the wilderness on hot sand, stones or thorns.

II. Let Us Try Them on

Observe with delight:

Their perfect fitness. They are made to suit each one of us.

Their excellent foothold: we can tread with holy boldness upon our high places with these shoes and trample on serpents and scorpions in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Their marching power for daily duty: No one grows weary or footsore when he is shod with these.

Their wonderful protection against trials by the way: "You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot" (Psalm 91:13)

Their pleasantness to wear, giving rest to you.

Their adaptation to every hard work, climbing, plowing, maneuvering, crossing deserts, jungles, hills, valleys and rivers.

Their endurance of fire and water: God promised his children, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; When you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isaiah 43:2). By peace of mind we learn to pass through every form of trial.

Their fighting qualities: They are really a part of "the whole armor of God." All other armor, mentioned in Ephesians 6:10-18), is powerful but not enough without these heavenly shoes. Therefore,

Hannah said in her prayer, "He (God) will guard the feet of His saints" (1 Sam. 2:9)

III. Let Us Look At the Barefooted Around Us:

The sinner is unshod. Yet he kicks against the goads. How can he hope to fulfill the heavenly pilgrimage?

The professor is slipshod, or else he wears tight shoes. His fine slippers will soon be worn out. He loves not the gospel, knows not its peace, seeks not its preparation. The gospel alone supplies a fit shoe for all feet. To the gospel let us fly at once. Come, poor shoeless beggar!

"Put sandals in his feet," were among the first words of welcome to the returning prodigal son (Luke 15:22). To be shoeless was in Israel a mark of great disgrace, indicating a lost inheritance, a state of misery and poverty, "His name shall be called Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed.'" (see Deuteronomy 2:10)

The heavenly shoes will make you fly: The Chinese advertise shoes, which enable the wearer to walk on the clouds! Compare that with what is written in Isaiah 40:31, "But those who wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength, **they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.**" Is it not written also, "God shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone" (Psalm 91:11).

"Therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1,2).

How beautiful are those feet that wear the heavenly shoes: Remember this great biblical description of the servants of God which says, **"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns!"** (Isa. 52:7)

The preparation of the gospel in the verse is paraphrased, "Shod with the firm footing of the solid knowledge of the gospel". The word "preparation" signifies preparedness and readiness. Note that the same author, St. Paul, says to his disciple Timothy in another place, **"Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season...**for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires..." (2Tim 4:2,3), also "I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone" (Rome 1:15,16).

None can make a shoe to the creature's foot, so that he shall go easy on a hard way, but Christ: He can do it to the creature's full content. It is the soldier's shoe that is meant, which, if right, is to be of the strongest make, being not so much intended for fine clothes as for defense.

The gospel shoe will not come on your foot so long as that foot is swelled with any sinful practice. This evil must be purged out by repentance, or you cannot wear the shoe of peace.

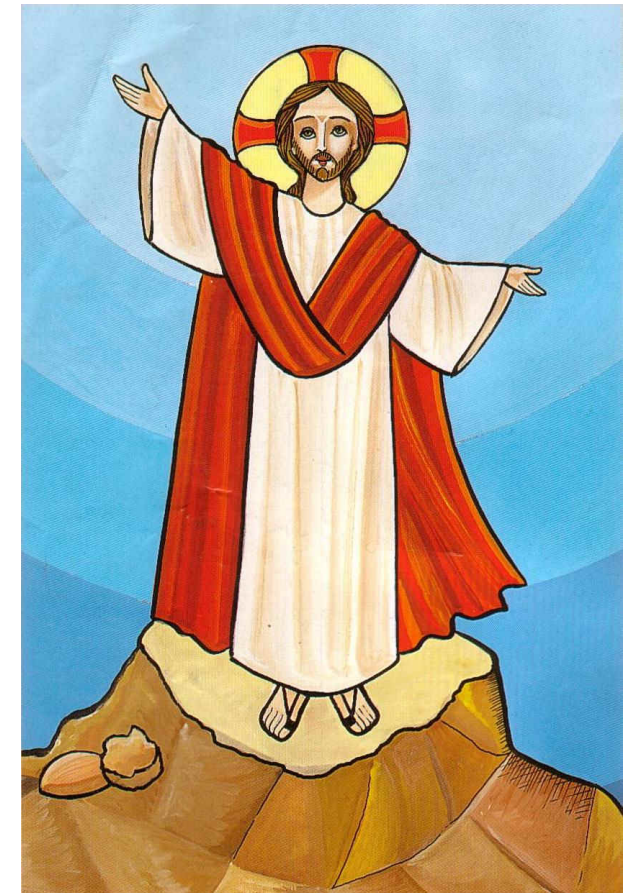
The Jews were to eat their Passover with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, and all in haste (Exod. 12:11). In the same manner, we also can neither eat of the body of Christ, nor drink His blood, unless we examine ourselves and have the readiness and worthiness, or else we are eating and drinking judgment to ourselves not discerning the Lord's body (1Cor. 11:23-34)



The Heavenly shoes!

Our Journey from Earth to Heaven through Time.

By Fr. Augustinos R. Hanna



"Shod you feet with the preparation of the gospel of Peace" (Eph. 6:15)