

**“Be Strong in the Lord
by Shodding Your Feet with the Preparation
of the Gospel of Peace”**

by Elder Bill Jones

The theme for the month of May has to do with our feet being shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. It is another piece of the whole armor of God that Paul suggests we need to figuratively put on to provide us with added protection and strength in our daily struggles and warfare against spiritual wickedness. Our discussions to date in the preceding articles for the year, have centered on girding ourselves with truth and the breastplate of righteousness; we have enumerated attributes such as mercy and justice and truth and righteousness that attend the application of those pieces of armor. The addition of each piece of armor builds for us an ever increasing foundation of strength. Our application of these preparations are a part of what makes up the **FIRM FOUNDATION** that will support our relationship with God and support the activities that God desires us to be involved in.

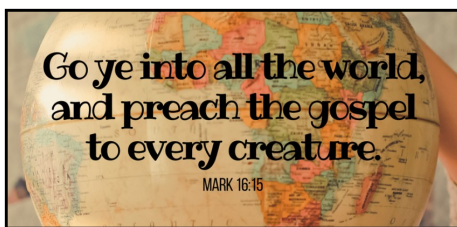


Before we go any further it is important to recognize that our monthly themes, which come from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, have been emphasizing that God's people have to be strong. The examples used by Paul were not intended to be some clever analogy.

In Paul's mind, when he was talking about being "Shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace," he was talking about something more than wearing a pair of shoes for battle that were comfortable or fit well or were strong and well made; it was more than allowing the wearer of the shoes to move around easily because their construction provided a firm footing. Instead it was important to Paul that the analogy of the shoes be understood as representing another piece of the armor, made with the special intent of providing a firm foundation—**A FIRM FOOTING**—for the efforts which should be made to spread Christ's gospel of peace.

Paul understood that the gospel means good news or good tidings. Paul knew that Christ went throughout Galilee teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. Jesus' message was about the coming of God's Kingdom on Earth and how to prepare for it. The message was to provide understanding, direction, assurance and confidence to all who would listen and believe. Jesus told His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:14-15).

Paul knew the personal sacrifice Christ made that we might have eternal life. Paul himself was willing to give his life to the effort of spreading the gospel. He knew the dedication it



would require, and he also knew Christ was depending on those who were His followers to spread the good news. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick both physically and spiritually and to give the promise of salvation and eternal life. The key to our understanding Paul's reason for directing our attention to the use of the shoes, as part of the armor of God, lies in Paul's conviction that the gospel of Christ or gospel of peace is to be spread throughout the world.

I believe that Paul felt that the shoes represented the fact that the wearer of the shoes had the intention of **purposefully going somewhere** with the intent of **accomplishing something** that was seen as **being important**. When Paul said, “Shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace,” that charge to the people to be prepared, was an important part of Paul’s efforts to recruit disciples and is important to us if we wish to be Christ’s disciples. Having our feet fitted with the “Shoes of the Gospel of Peace,” allows us to be ready to share the gospel with others. We should always be prepared for whenever such an opportunity arises.

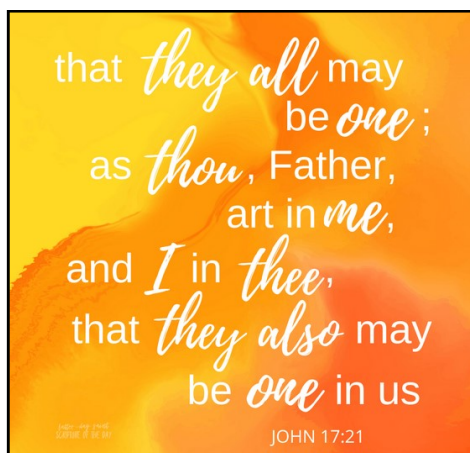
Does the spreading of the gospel mean as much to us as it did for Paul? For it to mean as much we have to be convinced, as Paul was convinced, that the gospel, the good news, was intended not just for him or us, or a select few, but for the world. When we visualize ourselves shodding our feet with the gospel of peace, or putting on the whole armor of God to fight against spiritual wickedness, part of that process must entail our recognizing we do it not for just ourselves, but for others as well.

Many times in the scriptures Christ has talked about His concern and His efforts to assure mankind of the love He and His heavenly Father have for all of us. He tries to get us to recognize this love and to get us to reflect this same love for our fellowmen. Consider His words: “A new



commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; As I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35).

Peace comes from unity and closeness with God. As Christ's disciples, this is the peace He wishes us to recognize and to teach with the emphasis being on our closeness with God and Christ. Christ's prayer to His Father is evidence of the desire He has for this unity. He prays, "That they all [*meaning His disciples*] may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which thou gavest Me I have given them; . . . that they may be made perfect in one, even as We are one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" (John 17:21-23).



We claim to represent Christ's Church. Prior to this we asked the question, "Does the spreading of the gospel mean as much to us today as it did for Paul?" Arthur Oakman, in his book "God's Spiritual Universe," mirrors Paul's belief about our responsibilities to our fellowmen. To quote him, "He (meaning God) **is fashioning** a people, 'knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth' (D&C 1:4a), **to use them for the salvation of mankind**. His people are to prepare a **feast of fat things**, (meaning that which pertains to the gospel and God's Kingdom) **and then invite the world to partake.**" That answers the question how we as God's people should feel about the spreading of the gospel message.



If we make a covenant with God to accept this responsibility, then we must do as Paul's analogy of the shoes says and place upon our feet, that footwear whose preparation is in the likeness of the gospel of peace; and then do as Paul counseled the Ephesians to do which was to **STAND FIRM** in the **READINESS** that comes from covering their feet in that manner. Shoes of that manner described by Paul, are meant to give the wearer the ability to cross over rough ground, which could be difficult and dangerous or frustrating and discouraging, when engaging in the spiritual battle that affects the souls of men and women. The wearing of the shoes are done to neutralize the forces that seek to inhibit our ability to fight. **When we stand firm with the gospel of peace, nothing will shake us from our convictions of what we know to be true.** Peace is the foundation we stand firmly on which is made of the inward peace and knowledge derived from God's love for us and the sacrifice of His Son.

It is true that with any battle to be faced there is always the element of fear or doubt or uncertainty. Often when we see the challenge before us we are prone to question ourselves and our abilities. Sometimes we may even question the faithfulness we should have in Christ's Word, but our Lord is ever faithful and in His Words and promises we can always trust. In John 14:27, Christ says, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." We can trust in the Lord. He is faithful to His Word. It gives us strength and assurance to walk through the trials before us.

We should look to the example of those who have gone before us such as Alma and the sons of Mosiah to see how God sought to fashion their abilities to be used for the salvation of their fellowmen. They had been men who had worked to destroy God's Church and lead away many souls.



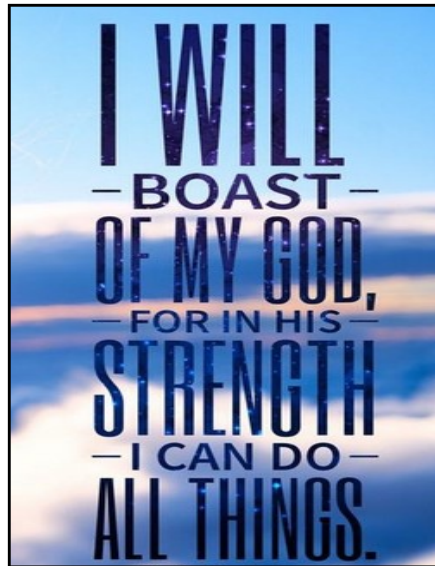
In their extreme rebellion they were confronted by an angel of the Lord who made them aware of the bitterness and eternal torment of the bonds of iniquity. The intensity of the experience persuaded them to repent and return from the edge of the dark abyss on which they stood. They were so impressed with their experience that, “They were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, **for they could not bear that any human soul should perish**” (Mosiah 12:5).

They became instruments in the hands of God, going through the land preaching and teaching and bringing many souls to the knowledge of their Redeemer. They did that until the time came that the sons of Mosiah decided to go to the Lamanites, their motivation still being that they could not bear the thought of even one human soul being lost. They hoped maybe they could save even a few.

They went forth among the Lamanites suffering many privations; being spit upon and mocked and stoned and cast into prison, and when they were depressed, and ready to turn back, the Lord asked them to **STAND FIRM** in the **READINESS** that comes from shodding their feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. To quote Ammon who was one of Mosiah's sons, "The Lord comforted us, and said, 'Go amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions; and I will give unto you success'" (Alma 14:111).

They did as the Lord asked. They entered into the Lamanites' houses and taught them, and taught them in their streets, and upon the hills, and in their temples; and the Lord blessed their efforts. Many thousands of the Lamanites were converted, and Ammon was caused to rejoice, saying, "Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength, I am weak; therefore, I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God; for in His strength I can do all things; Behold, how many thousand of our brethren has He loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love; and this because of the power of His word which is in us; Therefore have we not great reason to rejoice?"

(Alma 14:92-93)



We see from this the validity of Apostle Oakman's testimony that God is fashioning a people to use them for the salvation of mankind. We also see the wisdom of the Apostle Paul and his counsel to put on the full armor of God and to shod our feet in the preparation of the gospel of peace, and to stand firm in readiness so that our fellowmen might be brought to an understanding and acceptance of their God.

May we move forward in expectancy—understanding that “He that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing: unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; yea unto such **it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed**; yea and it shall be given unto such, to bring thousands of souls to repentance ...” (Alma 14:103-104).

