New Hope Global Sermon June 25 2021 No Bare Feet Allowed

**Introduction**

For the past year and a half we have lived in the tropical climate of Florida, in the southeastern United States. It is a state known for its sunshine, beaches, alligators and Walt Disney. Last week a friend took me with her to shop for shoes at a national chain called Famous Footwear. I was looking for a pair of attractive flats to wear back up north. But here in Orlando over two-thirds of the store’s inventory was sandals, flipflops and sneakers. It was footwear for the tropics- if people wear shoes at all! So it’s no surprise to see a sign outside many restaurants and shops: No bare feet allowed.

However, as we end this miniseries on spiritual warfare, I close with Paul’s insistence that war boots are an essential part of the armor of God. Ephesians 6:15 says:

Stand on your feet alert, then you’ll always be ready to share the blessings of peace. (Passion)

For shoes, put on the readiness to preach the Good News of peace with God. (NLT)

Wear on your feet what will prepare you to tell the good news of peace. (NIRV -New International

Reader’s Version)

**The Footwear for Roman Soldiers**

So what is the footwear that was required for Roman soldiers in battle? John Stott describes the war boots as:

“the caliga (“half boot) made of leather. It left the toes free, had heavy studded soles and was tied to the ankles and shins with more or less ornamental straps. These equipped the soldier for long marches and for a solid stance. . .While they did not impede his mobility, they prevented his foot from sliding” (Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, IVP, 1979, p.279).

Kent Hughes adds, in his commentary,

“These boots serve for marching, especially in battle. Their function was like today’s cleated football shoe. They gave the foot traction and prevented sliding.. . .The ‘readiness’ of our text pictures us being ready with our caliga firmly planted on solid ground. Thus established, the enemy is not going to be able to push us back. Rather, we are set to advance.. . When our feet are shod and planted in the peace of God and its corollary the peace of God, we can stand firm against the greatest assaults of the enemy.

(K. Hughes, *Ephesians*, Crossway, 1990, pp.232-233).

Commentators link this image of feet and proclamation of the gospel to Isa.52:7 which says “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’

The value of the boots was thus two-fold. With the steel studded spikes warriors could stand their ground and not slip and fall in the presence of the enemy. But the boots were also for traveling long distances, like the herald who crosses mountains to come to Jerusalem and shout ‘Our God Reigns!’

**Peace with God and the peace of God**

Several key words are repeated in both the scripture and these descriptions of the war boots: readiness, preparation, and the Good News of peace. The preparedness/readiness indicates that the boots need to always be on the warrior for whichever purpose is at hand. The warrior has a message to deliver even though an enemy is constantly trying to derail or destroy both the warrior and the message. That message is the gospel proclamation of peace – peace with God and the peace of God. It is the peace of the gospel offered in Jesus Christ. Paul talks about this peace in an earlier part of the letter to the Ephesians. Chapter 2:12-19

11–12So don’t forget that you were not born as Jews and were uncircumcised . . .; you had none of the Jewish covenants and laws; you were foreigners to Israel’s incredible heritage;[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph.2%3A12-19&version=TPT#fen-TPT-10551a)] you were without the covenants and prophetic promises of the Messiah, the promised hope, and without God. 13*Yet look at you now! Everything is new!* Although you were once distant and far away from God, now you have been brought delightfully close to him through the sacred blood of Jesus—you have actually been united to Christ! 14Our reconciling “Peace” is Jesus! He has made Jew and non-Jew one *in Christ*.. . . His triune essence has made peace between us by starting over—forming[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph.2%3A12-19&version=TPT#fen-TPT-10554b)] one new race of humanity. . . 16Two have now become one, and we live restored to God and reconciled in the body of Christ. . . 18And now, because we are united to Christ, we both have equal and direct access in the realm of the Holy Spirit to come before the Father! (Passion)

This is the message of the gospel we fight for, the purpose of salvation and reconciliation that is good news to those who don’t know God. Once we have experienced this good news for our own salvation, then God calls us to spread that good news through all the world, making disciples of people of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. We may travel great distances to be that witness, as the runners traveling over the mountains to Jerusalem (Isa. 52:7), or we may be called to be a witness locally. Either way, we keep our war boots on and stand for the truth of the gospel and proclaim it with joy and courage.

But there’s a final application we need to make, beloved. It’s the difference between the message of peace **with** God and the reality for the Christin of the peace **of** God. This second reality is where the rubber hits the road for many of us. We have a sure salvation, (our peace with God), but the peace of God seems to flow in and out. Some of that vacillation is certainly a warfare issue as Satan causes discouragement, and sometimes a sense of distance from God and so we lose our peace. But, when we put on our war boots, that very act is a commitment of faith in both the message of peace with God and our experience of the peace of God. This is second kind of peace is what Paul describes in his letter to the Philippians:

6Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Phil.4:6-7)

When we live in God’s peace then we will be able to be His witness, standing firm for the truth and moving out with our gospel war boots on to go when God calls us to bring others to Him. As a global Christian, I have always loved the connection of Ephesians 6 with the Isaiah 52:7 passage because the proclamation ‘Our God Reigns’ is what people of every nation need to hear. It’s the global gospel for a global audience.

In the global spiritual battle for the souls of people, no bare feet are allowed.

Amen. Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson, New Hope Global Pastor, June 25 21.