



# Running Shoes

**Ephesians 6:14-15 NIV**

**Stand firm then...with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.**

## **How Fast Can You Run?**

When times get difficult and it feels like chaos has struck, there are some that just live for those moments. They thrive in the middle of a hurricane; they love the battlefield and feel at home when the volcano erupts. Perhaps you are that sort, the one everyone searches out during storms and looks to for calm. What though if that is not you, if you are a normal sort of person who finds it hard to relax when the crisis hits. There is a great number of resources available to us on how to relax; everything from cool jazz online to yoga classes and prescription drugs, but we generally need more than just a mood booster when we come up against it. We need real help, real strength, and support to see us through some difficulties. Remember, the Bible, in our passage from Ephesians, tells us that we go up against unseen forces of evil that claw and tear at our lives. The devil and supernatural beings have it in for us and just when we feel like all is well and there is nothing to bother us, along comes an attack from Satan and we need more than just common sense and a new pill to get us through it. We need God to help us, His resources to carry us. The great message of the Bible is that you are not alone, that Christ is your Savior in all circumstances, in every battle you face. It is up to you though how you will respond when Satan and supernatural forces take it to you.

Our Lord offers to provide you with special shoes so that your feet are fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. It is quite interesting that this symbolic language is referring to the kinds of sandals Roman soldiers were given when they went off to war. They had special knobs poking out from the soles, much like our modern cleats. They enabled the soldiers to dig into the ground when the fighting got fierce. When attacked and the enemy was pushing hard on them, the soldiers had the spikes to dig into the ground and keep them from being knocked back, from losing their footing. The knobs also gave the soldiers the traction necessary to move forward quickly and get going as they attacked. The shoes were one of the great military developments of its time. They gave Romans a decided advantage in their battles.

You have an amazing advantage as you go up against the trials and hardships of life. You have the strength and resources of God at your disposal. What will you do though when the spiritual enemies of evil come against you? Are you ready to do something about it? Listen to what God says is part of how we are to deal with the various ways Satan tries to break our spirit and lose our faith in God. That career which is about to crumble, the marriage on the rocks, the depression that keeps returning, the trouble with your grades, the lack of resources you need to take your next big step, the loneliness you feel as you end your day, the problems with your kids; it all has the feel of spiritual forces up against you and you need a savior. God has a message for you. **Stand firm then...with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.** (Ephesians 6: 14-15 NIV)

Readiness is an important factor in this help God offers. An English word that probably needs to be defined itself is the best way to translate the word used in its original language. Alacrity. It is brisk and cheerful readiness. There is no time to wait when the hardships of Satan come against you. Many of your friends and family members might wait around and not look to God for help, they may try to figure out what to do themselves, feel they are ok fighting Satan on their own. What if though, you went immediately to Christ when you feel the pressure on you, when you sense that what you face is more than just tough circumstances, that perhaps spiritual forces of evil have come against you? There is a runner in the Old Testament who served as a messenger for King David. Although he was warned that the news he was bringing the king would not be received well, Ahimaaz ran as fast as he could because he knew the king needed to quickly hear the outcome of the battle just fought. When it comes to fighting your battle against Satan, are you ready to run as quickly as you can to God for help? Are you fired up to gain the Lord's support or do you think you're better off fighting Satan alone? Do you have on your faith shoes, ones that want the Lord involved with your problems as soon as possible? Are you ready to have Christ on your side?

When Ruth lost her husband and she was left a young widow, she could have remained despondent and angry that God took her husband from her. She could have felt sorry for herself and given up on life. She might have decided there was no hope for people like her. Ruth might have moved on and tried to find some way to meet her need for companionship on her own. Instead, with her Gospel of Peace sandals on her feet, Ruth turned to the God of her mother-in-law and went with her to Israel. There, with the Lord showing the way for her, she met her husband Boaz, a kind and generous man who married her and together they formed a new family through whom came the future king of Israel and then of course, many generations later, Jesus. If you are ready to look for Christ when it just seems like you have come up against a bad end, when you see no way anything good can come out of your circumstance, the fight you just had with your boyfriend, the layoff that left you in financial trouble, the diagnosis of diabetes, the poor SAT score, the terrible upbringing you suffered, your past bad financial decisions you have made, it may just be that God has a plan for you that will make what you face now fade from view. The Lord, if you will turn to Him like Ruth did, is ready to fight this battle with Satan and give you a bright new future.

Maybe you haven't heard much about Mark, the friend of the Apostle Paul. He wasn't always Paul's friend. At one point he was a huge disappointment to him. Mark quit on Paul and Barnabas as they were on their missionary trip. He was an important part of the plan and when John Mark left and went home, Paul was pretty mad. He was so angry with Mark that when Paul and Barnabas were ready to go on a second missionary trip, Paul refused to bring Mark along even though Barnabas wanted him to come. Barnabas and Paul quarreled so fiercely over Mark that Barnabas refused to go on with Paul but took his cousin Mark on a separate missionary endeavor elsewhere. Have you ever failed so badly that you were embarrassed by it? I have been fired twice in my life and both times I was so humiliated, I wept. Perhaps you have let someone down, relapsed after being free of your addiction, sinned against a family member, made a terrible mistake that cost your company a large amount of money. We all have failed at some point, not raised our kids as well as we should have, made bad mistakes in our marriage, fallen for someone's money making scheme. Just think about John Mark. Rather than letting Satan decide for him how the rest of his life would go, he turned to Jesus and found He is also the Savior of failed missionaries, broken careers, lost opportunities, giving up when you should be giving out, trying harder, putting in more effort. At the end of Paul's life, he said of Mark, **Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.** (2 Timothy 4: 11 NIV)

Sometimes we forget that when Jesus died for us, He provided the Gospel of peace too. Prophesying of what Jesus came to do as Savior, Isaiah said He would be the Prince of Peace. Jesus Himself promised us His peace. **Peace I leave with you; 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.** (John 14:27 NIV) You don't have to be in turmoil over what you face. You don't need to stay upset over the mistakes you have made; over the challenges

before you that seem like monsters of doom. Run to Jesus as fast as you can. Get from Christ His peace. Let Him have the broken relationship, the financial hardship, the family struggle, the job situation. It is not hard for Jesus to work out your trouble. First though, you just need His peace. Go to Him and tell Him your situation. Immediately, the peace of Jesus will come over you and He will already have a solution in mind, a way of making what seems so rough and painful now fit into a plan for you, a purpose that will make sense. You will see how your life is crucial and fits into a bigger picture and it will amaze you. Just think of Thomas the disciple who wasn't with the others the day Jesus showed up resurrected in the upper room. He missed his chance. He had been so despondent over Christ death that he lost his opportunity. What hope did he have for getting the joy the others had? But remember, his time was coming. His glorious victory was just around the corner. For some, the day of great joy and success and accomplishment is Easter Sunday. For others, and this may be you, it is the following week. Thomas's day took a bit longer to reach, but with Jesus at work, it was just as sweet, perhaps even sweeter when his day finally arrived.