

The Shield Of Faith
Winning the War for Your Soul
Armor of God Series
Palmetto Baptist Church

Texts:

Ephesians 6:16. *“In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;”*

Genesis 15:1 *“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.””*

2 Samuel 22:31 *“This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.” (cf., Ps 18:30)*

Deuteronomy 33:29 *“Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs.””*

Psalms 18:2 *“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”*

Psalms 28:7 *“The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.”*

Psalms 33:20 *“Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.”*

Psalms 84:11 *“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly*

Psalms 91:3–6 *“For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.”*

Proverbs 30:5 *“Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”*

Introduction:

Throughout the pages of our Bible, God has always provided His appointed champions with weapons by which they are able to successfully wage war in His name and for His people. For example, Moses had a rod by which he defeated Pharaoh’s magicians and delivered God’s people from Pharaoh’s army. Samson had a jawbone by which he slew one thousand well armed Philistine soldiers. David had a sling by which he slew Goliath. (*From the Arsenal in Pilgrims Progress*).

And in the massive spiritual conflict that Paul has been talking about in Ephesians 6:10-13, God has provided weapons for us by which we can wage war successfully

in His name, for His honor, and by His strength. We have been looking at that armor in our series on Spiritual Warfare – Winning the War for Our Soul.

The armor that God has provided for us is the armor that His anointed appointed champion – Messiah Jesus – wore as our Champion. By means of this armor he has already met and defeated our ancient enemy on at least two specific occasions: His temptation and His crucifixion. By means of his perfect, flawless obedience as the Second Adam, he fulfilled each of God’s expectations thus procuring a perfect righteousness that had been lost by the disobedience of the First Adam. Christ’s obedience was credited to our account and His righteousness was imputed to us so that we stand accepted before God made holy and blameless not by our human work but by His atoning, cleansing work. Furthermore, the gospel announces the good news of a peace/shalom that Christ made by taking all our sins and transgressions on himself and suffering our condemnation so that God could freely give us Christ’s righteous standing and thus save us from our sins. These precious truths are described as a belt of obedience, a breastplate of righteousness, and shoes of eager readiness to announce this amazing peace to others who are still in darkness. Paul tells us to ***put on these three foundational pieces of armor*** and to ***wear them constantly***.

However, ***there are three additional pieces of armor that Paul tells us to take up*** as we engage the enemy in hand-to-hand combat – and the first of these is a shield by which we can stop the fiery arrows that Satan hurls at us from every direction.

In ancient warfare one of the most frightening and terrifying weapons facing soldiers in battle were the projectiles launched against him with deadly accuracy.

Roman archers were world-famous for their devastating accuracy. The average Roman archer carried 40 to 60 **arrows** in a quiver and could fire them in a matter of minutes. The Roman soldier also carried **spears or javelins** to hurl at the enemy from closer quarters or to stab at them once the shields of the enemy had been rendered useless by the flaming arrows. Finally, there were specialized archers that would shoot “**bolts**” or **darts** from a weapon like a crossbow, and these were especially deadly. In some cases, they could go right through a soldier’s body and kill the man standing behind him.

On the day of battle as the infantrymen would charge toward the enemy, their archers would fill the sky with a cloud of arrows that would rain death down on the enemy soldiers waiting to meet the charge. Many of these arrows would be set on fire to wreck devastating damage and create wholesale panic among the ranks of the defending army under attack.

Like the ancient archers of old, our spiritual foe has an unlimited quantity of deadly arrows set aflame with the fire of hell that he and his forces are constantly firing against God's soldiers. **Will our armor defend us against this kind of an onslaught?** In the final part of this section Paul introduces us to three additional important pieces of the armor we must make sure to carry into battle. *And the first of these is our shield. And – we are told, that above all, we need to take up this shield.*

Paul is not saying that this shield is more important than the other pieces, nor is he saying we can afford to pay less attention to the other pieces of the armor if we have our shield. Rather, he is stressing the importance and value of this piece armor for every attack we experience no matter how fierce the attack might be or how fearsome the weapons hurled against us by our enemy.

So, what exactly is this shield and more importantly, how do we use it effectively in combat?

First, there are two important ideas behind this image that Paul uses that we need to make sure we keep in mind as we strive to understand the nature of this shield, why we need it, and how to use it effectively.

1. Throughout the OT, God tells His people that He Himself is their shield – He will fight for them. He will protect from any attack against them. He will preserve them in any battle around them. His faithfulness to them causes Him to use His might and power and at times to bring His heavenly armies to their defense – He is their shield. Listen to these representative texts that reveal this amazing truth:

Genesis 15:1 “After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.””

2 Samuel 22:31 “This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.” (cf., Ps 18:30)

Deuteronomy 33:29 “Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs.””

Psalm 28:7 “The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.”

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Psalm 91:3–6 “For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a

shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.”

Proverbs 30:5 “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”

2. In Paul’s day, the citizens of Ephesus would have been familiar with two of their chief gods who were well-known for their fierce use of the bow and arrow – Artemis/Diana and Apollo.

Both gods were patron gods of Ephesus which meant they were responsible for the wellbeing and protection of the city and its citizens. It was common belief that if a person displeased or abandoned the worship of these gods, they would experience the wrath of one or both of them. One commentator observed that the punishment from the gods on those who failed in their civic or religious duty to the gods and to the city was well-known in the ancient world. Their wrath was a fearsome thing and would have created no small amount of fear in the Ephesian Christians who had totally forsaken the worship of and denied even the existence of Ephesus’ chief god and goddess, Apollo and Artemis/Diana and turned instead to follow and worship Christ.

Though these gods were but stone idols, behind them stood a very real, very powerful ancient enemy who was in fact mounting a ruthless and relentless attack on those Christ had rescued from the realm of darkness and granted citizenship in His glorious realm of grace. Who would protect them from the fierce arrows of Satan’s wrath? Paul’s answer – Christ Himself would protect you by means of His power and strength that would be an invincible, impenetrable shield!

So, if we (like the Ephesians) are to have this same protection that Jesus gave to them, we must understand the nature and function of this shield, as well as how to use it practically and effectively when we find ourselves in the heat of battle.

I. What exactly is the Shield of Faith?

A. Its Biblical Description – a large Roman shield (θυρεος)

- Two kinds of shields in ancient Rome – a small round shield and this one.
- About 4 ½ feet high and 2 feet wide – shaped like a curved door.
- Made of wood and often covered with layers of thick animal skin and sometimes sheathed in metal. Big enough for a man to crouch behind.

- So – what exactly is this shield made up of?

B. Its Theological Definition – “the faith”

*Jude 1:3 “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for **the faith** that was once for all delivered to the saints.”*

- This shield is `made up of something Paul identifies as “the faith” and that Jude states was once and for all delivered to the saints by God through His apostles.
- “Faith” here is not referring primarily to our faith or trust in God, although that is certainly how the shield is actually used.
- But the shield itself is actually something Paul mentioned earlier in the book when he said there was “one faith” (4:5) and we as a church were to work hard to come to the unity of this faith (4:13). And this body of truth is what we must commonly speak or confess as believers out of our love for Christ (4:15).
- These doctrinal truths matter because our belief (faith) in them, our reliance on them (trust), and our obedience to them (faithfulness) is how we were saved from our sins and rescued from Satan’s realm (1:13; 2:8-9; how we have full and free access to God (3:12); and how Christ presently dwells in our hearts (3:17).
- It is important that we understand that our faith – our belief – only has these amazing effects if what we are believing is actually true – that it corresponds to reality. My fervent and passionate belief that the earth is flat does not make it so – and in this case, my faith is useless because what I am believing and trusting and operating my life by is not true.
- So here is the big question: **What is it that we are to believe** that saves us from our sin? That rescues us from the power of Satan and delivers us from the realm of darkness? That grants us access to God the Father? That makes us members of Christ’s body – the church? That causes Christ to dwell in our hearts? And that gives us unity as we grow and mature into the likeness of Christ?
- Answer – the truth from God about God, about us, and about the world around us. And that truth is found in an ***authoritative body of doctrine or teaching that God gave to His Church through His apostles and preserved in our New Testaments. And this body of doctrine is called “the faith” once and for all delivered to the saints. It was given by God through the Holy Spirit to His apostles who wrote it down in 27 inspired books (NT) that completed the 39 inspired books God had given through His prophets in the OT.***
- So the shield of faith is grounded in a set of doctrinal truths about God and His Christ that will protect us from any assault from Satan against us.

C. Its Spiritual Function – to extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one!

- God gave us a shield designed to cover us spiritually and to protect us personally by quenching or extinguishing any kind (all) of fiery dart from the wicked one. According to this text, Satan is constantly hurling fierce and fiery darts/arrows at you and this shield is designed to protect you!
- ***It is designed to protect us corporately as a church*** – as we hold to and obey our common confession of these doctrines.
 Illust: Roman soldiers would link up their shields and form a “turtle like tank” that was invincible. As we hold these truths commonly, spiritually, it is like this Roman military formation.
- ***It is designed to protect you individually*** from all of Satan’s attacks – one commentator identified these attacks as:
 1. ***The arrow of Temptation***
 - Bait that causes our sinful flesh to be aroused. Sources are the world, the flesh, and the devil. We have been given truth about that exposes this bait for what it really is (James 1).
 2. ***The fiery shaft of Trials***
 - Affliction and pressure in the circumstances of life that cause us to wear down and give up. We have been given assurances in the word that God will sustain us in and through these pressures (James 1:2-4).
 3. ***The dart of Tribulations***
 - Persecution for righteousness sake. We have been given promises that God will not forget us, will strengthen us, will vindicate us, and will reward us for suffering for His sake (Matt 5:10-11).
 4. ***The bolt of Treacherous Teaching***
 - False teachers and false teaching designed to mislead us. We have been told the truth about them, how to recognize them, and how to refute their error and resist their false influence (2 Peter 2:1-22).

We are given an unbelievable assurance/promise here – the shield of faith will quench all of the fiery darts/arrows that Satan launches against us. Which brings up the second question – How do we actually take up this shield so that it’s protection is always available?

II. How Do I Take Up This Shield of Faith and Use it Effectively?

A. We must Receive the Truth by believing it!

James 1:21 “Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”, ESV)

- We Must Believe the Right Things – What God has Revealed to Us
- We must be faithful to believe what God has told us rather than what we have thought up on our own or others have told us.
- In other words, we need to go to the right source for truth and when we get there, we need to believe the right things about what God has said!
- ***We don’t get to make our own shield out of our own beliefs or ideas about God’s Word, God’s Ways, or God’s Will!***
- Cardboard shields won’t work when under fire from the enemy!

B. We must Reflect the Truth – by obeying it!

- We Must Behave in Right Ways – What We are Revealing about Us
- This is the real way we know whether we are trusting God and having faith in His Word – when we do exactly what He said in the way He said it under the circumstances He told us to do it in. ***Obeying this way is exceptionally hard.***
- Obedience is hard enough on a good day! But it matters most when our life is under attack and what God said to do seems totally illogical or even abhorrent to us! What will be our victory and our security at such a time? Faithfulness to what God has revealed!
- By faithfulness to “the Faith” we will overcome the World!
1 John 5:4 “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”
- By our faithfulness/obedience to the Faith we please God who rewards those who diligently seek Him!
Heb 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” ***And seeking Him means learning what He said, believing it to be the right thing to do, and doing it no matter how hard it is to do!***

C. We must Remain in the Truth – by trusting it! (Two texts to help us)

Proverbs 30:5 “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”

Proverbs 3:5–6 “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

- This speaks to our faithfulness to “the faith” – the truth – that God has given us. Will we trust it enough to rest in its promises when the darkness overwhelms us? Will we trust it enough to heed its warning when the pathway or opportunity seems so right in our eyes? Will we follow the

wisdom it gives when it counters our own wisdom or the wisdom of others around us that appear to be succeeding and enjoying life?

- Will we follow “the faith” and remain in it faithfully doing what its says and following its counsel? Or will our faith waver to the point that we will lean on our own understanding when we are under pressure?
- Which brings us to the third and final consideration this morning – what is it that makes this shield so effective and that gives it such power?

III. Why is this Shield so Powerful and Invincible?

A. *Two OT texts give us the answer – God Himself is the shield for His people.*

Genesis 15:1 “After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.””

2 Samuel 22:31 “This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.” (cf., Ps 18:30)

- Faith itself is not a magical force that we raise up in the face of Satan by which he is repelled. It is never our faith or even our faithfulness that protects us. This is why, try as we might, at the end of the day just trying to believe harder or to have a more positive faith outlook never works!
- Rather, it is God Himself who is the Shield – He is our protector and our protection. And when we turn to Him, to His strength, and to His provision – we are fully covered and protected by what He has done!

B. *Two NT accounts affirm this answer – Mark 9:17-24 & Luke 22:31-33*

1. *The Power of Christ despite the Powerlessness of His Disciples (Mk 9)*

- Jesus has just come down from the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John.
- While they were on the mountain, the rest of the disciples remained below (presumably in Capernaum) – and a father had come to them with a son who had been severely tortured by a demon. Desperate for help, this father came to these disciples for help.
- The disciples were confident they could help for two reasons – 1) Jesus had given them authority to cast out demons in His name (Mk 6:7-11); and, 2) they had in fact cast out many demons already (Mk 6:13).
- However, this time they fail utterly. And when Jesus comes the father turns to him for help and Jesus casts out the demon.

- However, before he casts out the demon, Jesus rebuked his followers, and this father for lacking something – faith!
- The father immediately responds to Jesus’ rebuke and states, “I do believe, but help my unbelief!” (Mk 9:24)
- The disciples on the other hand remain confused – “Why could we not cast this particular demon out?” We believe in you and follow you – so why could we not cast this demon out?
- Jesus answer is instructive – because you did not pray (Mk 9:29).
- In other words, the disciples never had the power to cast out demons themselves – they had been granted this because of Jesus’ power and authority – and the reason they were not able to cast this demon out was because they had stopped depending on His power and were actually thinking they themselves could cast out this demon – after all, they had cast many out in previous chapters.
- And Jesus is reminding them – I am the shield. I am the source of power. And the reason you could not cast out this demon and deliver this boy is because you did not ask me! You did not pray. Instead, you relied on your power and the fact that you believe enough to follow me. That isn’t enough – you must totally depend on me and the ultimate recognition of dependence is prayer!

2. The Prayer of Christ despite the failure of His Disciples (Lk 22)

- Jesus is having a final teaching session with his apostles prior to His betrayal and coming crucifixion.
- He knows that Satan is coming to test these men who have left all to follow him. He also knows that Satan will not ultimately succeed.
- He knows that one of them, Peter, will face a particularly fierce assault from Satan to try to get him to abandon His faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus knew that Peter would deny him three times that very night – but – Jesus also knew that Peter’s denial would be only temporary and that he would repent and be restored to a very fruitful and powerful ministry.
- BUT – in this text – who was it that would protect Peter and how would he do it? In other words – who would be Peter’s shield and how would this shield work?
- This text reveals that God Himself would protect Peter and the means by which He would do so is that Jesus would pray for Peter – specifically that His faith would not fail in the heat of his temptation.
- And this is exactly how we are protected – Jesus does the very same thing for us – He prays for us! Three specific texts tell us this:

John 17:9, 15: “I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.”

Romans 8:34: “Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”

Hebrews 7:25 “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”

Conclusion:

Every temptation, directly or indirectly, is the temptation to doubt or distrust God or something He has said or done. Sin involves believing Satan over God, even if we don't initially see it that way. All sin is an act of unbelief – we either fail to believe the truth or we fail to act according to the truth we believe – and therefore, the antidote to unbelief is belief that results in right thinking and obedient living.

When we decide that our way is better than God's or when something God has said is unacceptable to us, inevitably our faithlessness has led us to deny Him and to disregard Him in our heart! We have laid down our shield and taken up one of our own making – a cardboard shield powerless to protect us in the heat of combat!

So, using the shield involves intentionally choosing to trust God's word even when we would rather have our own. And to do this – to choose God's way – we must know God's Word trust the God of the Word.

Here are some practical ways to help develop a habit of using the shield God gave you properly and effectively:

1. Read and Study God's Word Regularly

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2. Hear the Preaching of the Word Faithfully

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

3. Receive Instruction from God's Word Readily and Submissively

1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

4. Review God's Word Repeatedly and Recall it Constantly

Psalm 1:2 ... and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psalm 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

- ***So – how goes the battle?*** Are you pierced through with arrows and fears and doubts? If so, surely you have failed to use the shield God has given you. Perhaps you like the father in Mark's account – struggle to believe. Perhaps you need to pray like he prayed – “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!”