

The Shield of Faith – Ephesians 6:11-17

I. Introduction:

- A. Picture, if you will, an ancient valley community, clinging to the banks of a rushing river.
1. Against that village there is a terrible army, coming to kill, loot and destroy.
 2. The poor community has no natural defense other than the river to its back.
 3. So the male residents dress themselves in their battle array:
 - a. protective shoes, metal greaves on their shins, leather chaps on their thighs and leather girdles.
 - b. They have coats of mail on their chests and helmets with various masks covering their faces.
 - c. They attach a metal buckler to their less dominant arm – those small shields which can protect from the enemies' sword attack.
 4. Then they pick up their well-sharpened weapons, and they pour out the gate of their city with the intention of defending their wives and families.
- B. The intelligence the defenders have has led them to believe their attackers have no chariots, artillery or horse.
1. They are expecting hand-to-hand combat, just as these mercenaries have used on other communities.
 2. But they are surprised by the fact they have now incorporated archers into their battle plan.
 3. Not only are arrows raining down on the defenders, but those arrows are covered in flaming tar.
 4. With some of their clothes on fire, they retreat into the city, chased by the jeers of the enemy.
 5. But the next morning, they emerge with large metal shields which can quench and divert those fiery darts.
 6. This time the battle goes more in favor of the defenders than the attackers.
- C. Having looked at a great many examples of personal and practical faith from the Old Testament, I'd like to consider a few New Testament scriptures which describe some of the principles of faith.
1. I am hoping that these principles will be just as practical as the earlier examples.
 2. I am asking the Lord to teach us – to teach me – **why** real, practical faith in God is important.
 3. I am asking the Lord to show us **what** practical faith **is** in the Lord's own sight.
- D. As you undoubtedly surmised, the illustration with which we began flows out of something which Paul used to encourage the saints in **Ephesus**.
1. I expect that Bro. Austin will show us more about the church of that city, so at this point I'll just say that those people knew full well the fury of God's enemies. You can read about that in **Acts 19**.
 2. Perhaps some of the brethren in Ephesus were growing faint. Doubts were creeping in. Fear was building.
 3. As Paul moved toward the conclusion of his epistle he said, *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might."*
 4. And then he illustrated the means by which they could defend themselves against the attacking enemy.
- E. It's not my intention to take you through each piece of the Christian armor.
1. I want to focus on the theme which we have been considering for several weeks now.
 2. *"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."*
 3. For the sake of an outline, let's break **verse 16** apart into each of its primary words.

II. Paul begins by saying: **"ABOVE all."**

- A. Doesn't **"above all"** suggest that this is more important the things which preceded it?
1. Perhaps it is saying: this surrounds and enhances all the earlier pieces of the Christian armor.
 2. When we are talking about defense against spiritual attack, no matter what the source, faith is the most important. **BUT that** is contrary to ordinary Christian logic.
 3. Many pastors would say that knowledge of the Bible is the more important in the defense of Christianity.
 - a. Usually out of context they quote, *"Study to show thyself approved unto God; a workman that needeth not to be shamed..."* They say, *"Strengthen that mind of yours."*
 - b. Or quite appropriately they might say, *"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."* Put on the Christian armor and get into battle.

4. But Paul says there is something more important than a thorough knowledge of God's truth.
5. A heart full of righteousness is good, and beautiful feet prepared to share the gospel are commendable.
6. But he says, above all these and the other things, take up the shield of faith.
7. These other items of Christian armor will prove to be useless, if they are not empowered by God.

B. I will point out that this *"above all"* comes before the helmet of salvation.

1. Paul is discussing the day-to-day life of the Christian, but there is no life without salvation in Christ.
2. Living in Christian victory, winning countless battles in the name of the Lord, mean nothing if the warrior is not a child of God.

C. In regard to chest protectors and head gear, why is faith above all?

1. Because it is by faith we link our spiritual defense and even our offensive efforts at evangelism with the power of God.
2. The Lord is a hundred times more willing to bless our trust in Him than how well we have prepared our minds, hands or feet.
3. And yes, pointing to Paul's final point, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, has strength and victory in itself, but still without the arm of faith, it is not going to reach very far.

D. What I am trying to say is this: you and I need to work on our faith in the Lord.

1. We need to trust Him more and trust ourselves and our preparations less.
2. We need to lean on Him, not just in our knowledge of His Word.
3. We need to learn to **expect HIM** to defeat the enemy & to earn His own victories through our weak efforts.
4. If we enter the Lord's battles with doubts, then we will surely be defeated, and God will not be glorified.
5. Faith is the victory, my friends, which over comes the world.

E. Earlier, there in the city of Ephesus there was a family of Jews who attempted to make a name for themselves by battling Satanic forces.

1. Without faith in Christ, because they didn't know the Lord, they said to a demoniac, *"We adjure your by Jesus whom Paul preacheth come out of that poor man."*
2. *"And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"*
3. And that demon-possessed man overcame those pretending exorcists.
4. Satan could say the same thing to us when we go into battle without grasping the power of God by faith.

III. Still emphasizing that point, Paul said, **"Above all, TAKING..."**

A. Those villagers in my story, had to deliberately pick up each piece of their armour and put it on.

1. It took a few minutes to do properly.
2. Their wives didn't slip the shoes or greaves on their husbands while they were sleeping.
3. And the Lord didn't miraculously adorn them while they ate their breakfast or played with the kids.
4. This is what I mean when I say you and I need to work on our faith in the Lord.
5. We need to deliberately trust Him more and specifically trust ourselves less.
6. We need to lean on the Lord and learn to expect great things from Him.

B. And if I might ask: doesn't the word *"taking"* suggest the availability of that faith?

1. Not everyone has the same mind and the same ability to remember what doctrine this particular heretic believes.
 - a. And not everyone is filled with same number of scriptures. Not every arm is equally strong.
 - b. Not every boot has the same thick sole and strong support.
2. But the omnipotent God is equally available to every willing and surrendered soldier of Christ.
3. And faith is available to every child of God. *"The Lord giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not."*
4. The question is: are we going to take up this shield of faith, or try to defend ourselves on our own
5. *"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."*

IV. Now, let's consider that **SHIELD**.

- A. The Old Testament speaks of two kinds of shields.
1. There was a small one which attached to the forearm of a soldier, and which was usually called a *"buckler."*
 2. After Israel entered the Promised Land, two and a half of their tribes took up residence on the eastern side of the Jordan.
 3. **I Chronicles 5** describes them: *"The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, (were) valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war..."*
 4. But then **I Chronicles 12:8** describes some of the men who came to David while he was a fugitive.
 5. *"Of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness, men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle SHIELD and BUCKLER, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains."*
- B. Beside the *"buckler,"* the Old Testament speaks of something else called a *"shield."*
1. The difference between them was size, weight and strength.
 2. The buckler was portable and was buckled to the soldier's forearm, but the shield was much larger, sometimes as large as the man using it.
 3. It was also often curved to some degree, surrounding the warrior just a bit.
 4. These two kinds of shields are compared in **I Kings 10:16-17** – *"King Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of gold went to one target."*
 - a. The word which the Bible uses in that verse is elsewhere translated *"buckler."*
 - b. *"King Solomon made two hundred (bucklers) of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of gold went to one buckler."*
 - c. Then *"he made three hundred shields of beaten gold, three pounds of gold went to one shield, and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon,"* as decorations.
- C. So, to which kind of shield was Paul referring in **Ephesians 6**?
1. Well, the language is different and unrelated, so that doesn't give us any information.
 2. But the Greek word translated *"shield"* is *"thureos"* (*thoo-reh-os*).
 - a. It is related to the word *"thura"* (*thoo'-rah*), which is the word the Lord Jesus used when He said,
 - b. *"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, & shall go in and out, & find pasture."*
 3. Judging from that, I think that Paul is talking about the large kind of shield which can cover the whole body.
 4. Another clue lies in those words *"above all."*
 5. Paul is not talking about the protection of a small area, but that of the whole body, the whole life.
 6. *"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench ALL the fiery darts of the wicked"*
- D. But remember it isn't our faith which is so important; it is the One in whom we put our faith.
1. And here my heart begins to overflow.
 2. When the Lord was encouraging Abram, **Genesis 15:1** says, *"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."*
 3. It is not simply that faith is the Christian's shield; it is that the Lord in whom we put our trust is our shield.
 4. And there are many scriptures which make that declaration.
 5. One of David's first Psalms is recorded in **II Samuel 22**. He said, *"The Lord, is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer. The God of my rock; in him will I trust: HE is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence."*
 6. In **Psalms 5** David illustrated the size of that shield. *"For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou COMPASS him as with a shield."*
 7. **Psalms 28:7** – *"The LORD is my strength and my SHIELD; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him."*

8. And in **Psalm 91** the Psalmist ties together both our words, *“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*
 - a. *I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.*
 - b. *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.*
 - c. *He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy **SHIELD** and **BUCKLER.**”*

- E. Remember, this faith of ours is nothing without the omnipotent God in whom we trust.
 1. Our faith is like a sheet of paper. It doesn't matter if it is 18 pound, 20 or 40 pound paper. It is paper.
 2. But if that paper is firmly affixed to 12 inch armor plate, Satan's arrows are not going to pierce it.

V. From what is our shield designed to protect us? *Fiery darts.*

- A. Paul doesn't define or explain them, and perhaps there is a blessing in that for us.
 1. The fiery darts he fires as **you** may not be the same as **mine**.
 2. Your flesh is different from mine, and your temptations are not the same as my temptations.
 3. Furthermore, the darts fired at me may be different one day from the next.
- B. Why does Paul describe Satan's arrows as *“fiery?”*
 1. Just to be honest, I would be in terror if a hundred arrows were fired in my direction whether they were carrying fire or not.
 2. An arrow is an arrow, but then there is that *“fiery”* adjective.
 3. That word is used less than twenty times in the Bible.
 4. About 25% of those references speak about the *“burning fiery furnace”* that Hannaniah, Mishael and Azariah had to experience in the **Book of Daniel**.
 5. And by the way, their faith in the Lord quenched those fiery darts.
 6. Some scriptures speak of **God's angels** as *“fiery.”* Then Peter uses the word just as Paul does.
 7. But the first few scriptures using that word speak of the *“fiery serpents”* which attacked Israel in the wilderness. And there the word was referring to **the fiery, painful poison** the venom carried.
- C. From what is God's shield of faith designed to protect us?
 1. One day it might protect me from trying to serve God in my flesh rather than in His power.
 2. On another occasion it might keep me from pride or personal self-confidence.
 3. Maybe you need protection from your short-temper and the temptation to be unjustly angry.
 4. And then there is our sin of cowardice, our lack of love for the brethren, or our resistance to God's will.
- D. Every sin we commit is a fiery poison which will weaken other areas of service and other areas of our lives.
 1. My pride will make me vulnerable to serving God in the flesh. The poison in one spot spreads to another.
 2. That fiery arrow that has struck my fearfulness bleeds over into stirring up my tendency to idleness.
 3. We need to be engulfed and surrounded by our shield, because we can't afford to be struck at any point.
 4. Faith in the Lord is the place where we can find victory over those sins.

VI. Notice the words *“able to QUENCH.”*

- A. Obviously, to quench means to extinguish.
 1. Whereas Satan means to **quench** your ability to serve your Saviour, by faith we may **quench** His fiery attacks.
 2. It doesn't matter if those arrows are ignited or not. They are doomed to be doused and repulsed.
 3. But if we are not people of faith, we will certainly struck.
- B. And then there is that word *“able.”*
 1. *“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be **ABLE** to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”* The word suggests the victory about which we have been speaking.

- C. And in Greek that victory is even more obvious than in English.
1. As you may know, there are two words used in the Textus Receptus which are both translated “power.”
 2. When Jesus said, *“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,”* he was referring to power in the sense of **authority**.
 3. But when Peter said, *“We are kept by the power of God unto salvation,”* he was speaking of the power of **divine strength**. The Greek word is *“dunamis.”*
 4. And the word *“able”* here in **Ephesians 6:16** is *“dunamai”* – and it is still speaking of power.
 5. This shield of faith has power given to it, by the God of all power, to extinguish the **all** the fiery darts of the wicked.

VII. There is one more major word in this verse: **“WICKED.”**

- A. *“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”*
1. I only checked my first three primary references, but they all agreed, so I didn’t dig any farther.
 2. They all said that even though the word is not found in the Bible, *“wicked”* refers to *“the wicked one,”* speaking of Satan.
 3. He is definitely mentioned in the context. *“Put on the whole armour – the panoply – of God, that ye may be able to stand against he wiles of the devil.”*
 4. But despite being in the context, I think we might make a mistake if we confine our enemies to one devil.
- B. We have the same problem in **Matthew 6:13**:
1. *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*
 - a. *Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*
 - b. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:”* From the evil one???????
 - c. *“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*
 2. I wonder, since the Bible doesn’t use the word *“Satan”* or *“devil,”* if we should confine our understanding of these verses strictly to him.
 3. Without a doubt, the world is a wicked place, and it often opposes our service of the Lord, sending all kinds of arrows of temptation in our direction.
 4. And even our flesh can be unruly and wicked.
 5. I’m not discounting Satan as the meaning of this verse, but I think that we need to have our eyes opened for other wicked adversaries as well.

VIII. Conclusion:

- A. *“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”*
1. What I’d like you to take home with you from this message is that despite our enemies, and despite our weaknesses, we do not have to live defeated lives.
 2. We have access to both offensive weapons like the sword of the Spirit.
 3. But we also can be well protected – surrounded by the armor of the Lord.
- B. But if we don’t deliberately seek our faith from the Lord, and if we don’t deliberately put that faith in the way of the attacks against us, we are **not** going to be victorious; we are not going to glorify Christ’s name.
1. The disciples prayed: *“Lord, increase our faith.”*
 2. We need to plead the same prayer.