

“...in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”
Ephesians 6:16

Quench those Fiery Darts

The Armor of God – The Shield of Faith Ephesians 6

A shield can be a very menacing thing. I cannot think of a shield that has flowers on it or a happy face. Most shields have emblems on them that invoke fear. An army that is advancing wants to strike fear in the hearts of their enemy. Fear can be very damaging.

What are some things that you fear?

I fear failure. I do not want to fail anyone. That includes my family, my co-workers, my ministry, and mostly my God. I say again, fear can be very damaging.

Paul explains the need to be equipped with the shield of faith. He has a break here in the list of armor. “In addition to all” introduces the last three pieces of armor. The first three, the belt, breastplate, and shoes were for long-range preparation and protection and were never taken off on the battlefield. The shield, helmet, and sword, on the other hand, were kept in readiness for use when actual fighting began.

Do you see other differences between the first three pieces and the last three pieces?

There are some differences, but the truth remains that we need to put on the entire armor.

Now let’s look into the history behind the shield. Roman soldiers used several kinds of shields, but there were two that were most common. The first was a small round shield, two feet in diameter. It was secured to the arm by two leather straps and was relatively lightweight. This shield was used to block the sword blows of the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting.

The second shield was the thureos, which Paul refers to here. This shield was about two and half feet wide and four and a half feet high.

Why do you think a soldier would need two different kinds of shields? Why do you think Paul referred to the second one rather than the first?

Different shields were for different ways of fighting. This second shield was designed to protect the entire body of the soldier. The shield was made of a solid piece of wood and was covered with metal or heavy oiled

leather. The soldiers who carried these shields were in the front lines of battle and normally stood side by side with their shields together, forming a horizontal wall extending as long as a mile or more. This kind of a stance would strike fear in the enemy because from a distance it was hard to see where the break was. It looked like a solid wall.

The shields were also useful in the aerial attack. The archers stood behind this protective wall of shields and shot their arrows as they advanced against the enemy. Anyone who stood or crouched behind such shields was protected from the barrage of enemy arrows and spears.

Now think of this shield. Why do you think Paul equates the shield with faith?

The faith to which Paul refers here is not the body of Christian beliefs. The passage would have read "the shield of *the* faith". The Christian beliefs were taken care of in the belt of truth. Here, Paul refers to basic trust in God. Faith takes hold of God's promises and God's resources which produce firm resolve.

How is your faith? Is there an area in your life in which you have not been trusting God? Write it down.

It is a trust issue.

I know it is easier to say it than it is to do it, but we need to give it to God. Our faith or trust in God is our shield against the enemy and the fiery darts.

Let me explain. In New Testament times the tips of arrows would often be wrapped in pieces of cloth that had been soaked in pitch. Just before the arrow was shot, the tip would be lit and then shot at the enemy troops. The pitch burned fiercely, and on impact it would spatter burning bits for several feet, igniting anything flammable it touched. So the arrow not only pierced the soldier's bodies, it could inflict serious burns and destroy clothing and gear. The shield, which had a covering of metal or leather soaked in water, was the most reliable protection against such flaming missiles because would either deflect or extinguish them.

Satan continually bombards God's children with temptations to immorality, hatred, envy, anger, covetousness, pride, doubt, fear, despair, distrust, and every other sin. These sound like fiery missiles to me. Satan's initial temptation to Adam and Eve was to entice them to doubt God and instead to put their trust in his lies. That was the first of his flaming missiles, from which all the others have lighted their flames. Every temptation, directly or indirectly, is the temptation to doubt and distrust God.

Do you see the enemy's purpose? It is to cause believers to forsake their trust in God, to drive a wedge between the Savior and the saved.

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith."
1 John 5:4

“Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.”
Proverbs 30:5-6

The shield of faith protects us from the lies of the enemy. 1 John 5:4 says that it is our faith that gives us victory and overcomes the world.

Read Proverbs 30:5-6.

Do you believe that every word of God is true? Do you believe God for who He says He is as revealed in Scripture?

What is it that God is asking you to have faith in?

Ask God to help you trust in Him with it, then take up your shield of faith and quench those fiery darts.

“It is faith in something that makes our lives worth living, but it is faith in Christ that makes life worth losing.” (Author unknown)

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

