



Armor of God

Session 3 – The Shield of Faith

March 1, 2022

Ephesians 6:11 - 13: Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Paul uses the armor of a Roman soldier as an analogy of the spiritual armor we are to put on. Each piece of armor is described in the letter to the Ephesians. We are focusing now on the Shield of Faith.

The Roman Shield (Scutum)



The shields were mostly made of wood - a few layers glued together to make the curved shape. The shield was then covered in leather and a sheet of linen cloth added to the front. Designs were usually painted onto the front. They were about two and half feet wide by four feet long.

Most designs were symmetrical and used the colors: red (for Mars the God of war), yellow, white and gold. Romans believed he threw thunderbolts from the sky.

Its compactness provided a thrusting force that had a great impact on the enemy and made frontal assaults against it very difficult.

The Roman armies were able to consistently defeat any enemy they faced, as they would close in on the enemy in dense, disciplined formations. Side by side, they would move forward thrusting their swords from behind a wall of shields. They would hurl arrows at them as they advanced.

These "arrows" were more like darts or javelins, pointed metal weapons hurled at the enemy from a distance.



The dart or javelin was a weapon hurled from a distance, not a close personal confrontation. They were designed not so much to kill as to incapacitate, to break up an advancing formation. They were simply obstacles that an advancing army had to deal with before it could close in and do battle with the enemy.

Satan's "Flaming Arrows"

Ephesians 6:16:

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Satan's schemes are to put any obstacle he can in your way. His flaming arrows are those stressful circumstances that make you fearful, that cause you to doubt and make you want to quit!

In the parable of the sower, note what Jesus says about obstacles:

Matthew 13:18 - 21:

"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

Think of the story of Abraham and Sarah:

Genesis 16:1 – 6:

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her."

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."

"Your slave is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

Abram and Sarah became anxious and discouraged, so Sarah came up with her plan, got Abram to agree to it, and it was trouble from then on. They panicked under pressure, failed to raise the shield of faith and they "did it their way."

Take Up the Shield of Faith

After putting on the helmet of salvation, as we talked about last week, we see ourselves as God sees us. We understand how valued we are that God would choose us, predestinate us, even before the foundation of the world.

Now, notice how chapter two opens:

Ephesians 2:1 – 10:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—

and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

How does Paul describe our former sinful lives?

Do you know how important it is to remember how God has rescued you?

Psalm 40:2-3:

He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.

C. S. Lewis from *Mere Christianity*: "It (failure) cures our illusions about ourselves and teaches us to depend on God. We learn, on the one hand, that we cannot trust ourselves even in our best moments, and on the other, that we need not despair even in our worst, for our failures are forgiven."

A. W. Tozer from *The Pursuit of God*: "A sweet but sobering memory of our past guilt and a knowledge of our present imperfections are not incompatible with the joy of the Lord; and they are of inestimable aid in resisting the enemy."

Then, thankfully, Paul gets our focus off of ourselves and back onto God:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:4-5).

And why did he save us?

...in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7).

The word translated faith is *pisteos*, which has a meaning of reliability or trustworthiness. So, the word can be translated either *faith* or *faithfulness*. So, verse 8 could be translated, "For by grace you have been saved, on account of God's faithfulness."

What contribution did you make to your salvation?

The shield that extinguishes Satan's flaming arrows is not the strength or the measure of your faith. It is God's faithfulness.

God is repeatedly referred to as our shield:

Genesis 15:1:

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision. "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

Psalm 7:10:

My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.

Psalm 91:4:

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Just to make sure that we get the point that everything is of God, not of us, Paul says:

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Here is a one-sentence mission statement for all who are Christ-followers:

1. Who are you? God's handiwork.
2. How did you get here? I was created in Christ Jesus.
3. Why are you here? To do good works.
4. What good works? The ones God prepared in advance for me to do.

If you know Jesus and you are his handiwork, you have a purpose. You're not on your own—I don't care how alone you may feel, you are never alone if you are God's handiwork.

And he has promised to provide for your needs:

Philippians 4:19:

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Satan's Scheme

2 Corinthians 2:11:

...in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

The flaming arrows that Satan will throw at you are for the purpose of forcing you off God's path. The shield that you hold up in your spiritual warfare is the shield of God's faithfulness.

1 Corinthians 10:13:

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

If you had to have strong faith that never wavered in order to protect yourself against Satan's flaming arrows, how often would that work?

Psalms 89:8:

Who is like you, LORD God Almighty? You, LORD, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

Satan and his demons can throw their fiery darts at us, but there is no circumstance that can cut us off from God's love:

Romans 8:38 – 39:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How to Take Up the Shield of God's Faithfulness

Psalm 3:

LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him." But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain. I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side. Arise, LORD! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked. From the LORD comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people.

The same God who was David's shield is your shield. We are able to withstand all of Satan's flaming darts as we learn how to hold up the shield of God's faithfulness.

How?

1. Recall a situation—an obstacle—that threatened you, and record how God's faithfulness got you through it:

2. Share that story with one other person.
3. Keep a record of answered prayer.
4. Memorize verses that remind you that God is your shield:

Psalm 3:3:

But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

Psalm 28:7:

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.

Psalm 33:20:

We (I) wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.