

“Faith’s Shield”

Ephesians 6:16; 1 Peter; Hebrews 4

East Berlin Community Church

Pastor Keith A. Mosebrook

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Introduction

- Three unvoiced questions during times of trials
 - “Is God unfair?”
 - “Is God silent?”
 - “Is God hidden?”
- We are involved in an invisible, cosmic conflict between Satan and God.
- God has supplied us with “permanent armor”
 - “Belt of truth”
 - “Breastplate of righteousness”
 - “Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace”

“Faith’s Shield! Ephesian 6:16

- Ephesians 6:14-16-- *“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one.”*

A. Historical Background of the Roman Shield. Two kinds of shields.

1. “Aspis” — a small, round shield, approximately 2 feet in diameter, worn on the arm to protect during hand-to-hand combat.
2. “Thereos” — a large shield, 2 ½ feet wide by 4 ½ feet tall, made of wood, overlaid with metal or hide or linen, designed to quench the “fiery darts” of the enemy

B. What are the spiritual “fiery darts”?

1. The “fiery darts” of suffering reproach for Christ because one is a Christian.
 - 1 Peter 4:12-- *“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when He glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”*
 - 1 Peter 4:14-16-- *“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”*
 - Persecution under Emperor Nero
2. The “fiery darts” of temptation.
 - 1 Peter 1:6-7-- *“In this you greatly rejoice, though now, for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*
 - a. The temptation to quit, to walk away from the faith, to turn back from following Christ.
 - Hebrews 10:32-34-- *“endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you had a better and an enduring possession, for yourselves in heaven.”*
 - Hebrews 10:35-39-- *“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: For yet a*

little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."

- b. The temptation to give in to the lusts of the flesh and sin.
 - James 1:13-15-- *"Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each of us is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death."*
 - c. The temptation to cool off and coast in our Christian walk.
 - d. The temptation to place other things or activities ahead of God in our lives. Misplaced priorities.
3. The "fiery darts" are designed to destroy us.
- 1 Peter 5:8-9-- *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. "*
4. Every "fiery dart" is a temptation to doubt or distrust God!
- a. Our adversary wants us to think that our situation is unique.
 - 1 Peter 4:12-- *"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you."*
 - 1 Peter 5:9b-- *"...knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."*
 - b. Satan sowed doubt in Eve's mind in the garden leading to the first sin.
 - Genesis 3:1-5 -- *"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You shall not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"*
- 1) He casts doubt on God's Word.—v. 1
 - 2) He casts doubt on God's Trustworthiness.
 - Genesis 2:16-17-- *"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*
 - Genesis 3:4-- *"You shall not surely die!"*
 - 3) He casts doubt on God's Goodness. Genesis 3:5

C. What is involved in taking up the "Shield of Faith"?

1. **Taking up the "shield of faith" involves Knowing the FACTS of what we believe.**
 - Ephesians 4:11-14-- *"gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastor and teacher, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."*
- a. **We need to know what we believe and why we believe it, or else we are...**
 - 1) Like children, vulnerable to those who appear to be adults but false teachers.
 - 2) Like ships on the sea, unstable, whipped about by every strain of teaching that comes along.

- b. The truths of God's Word become the ANCHOR in the time of storm! In the midst of the battle, all we have to hang on to is God's Word!
 - c. Illustration: Pilots need to trust their instruments when flying in the clouds or bad weather
2. **Taking up the "shield of faith" involves Combining the FACTS of faith with an ACT of FAITH!**
- a. The nation of Israel had the "facts of faith" but failed to combine them with an "act" of faith!
 - Hebrews 4:2-- *"For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it."*
 - b. "Faith" is only as good as the author and object of our faith. The shield behind which we hide is God Himself. Our faith is in Jesus Christ. He is our shield and defense.
 - Genesis 15:1-- *"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward!"*
 - Deuteronomy 33:27-- *"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you!"*
 - 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 majesty! Your enemies shall submit to you, and you shall tread down their high places."*
 - Psalm 84:11-- *"For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord will give grace and glory; No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly."*
 - c. Faith or trust without doubting.
 - James 1:6b-8-- *"he who doubts is like the wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; for he is double-minded, unstable in all his ways."*

D. Why then does God appear to be unfair, silent, or hidden?

- 1. Israel's experience with God's presence in the wilderness. The clearer the picture of God's direction, the weaker their faith in Him.
- 2. God appears to be unfair, silent, or hidden so as to build and strengthen our faith in Him!

BOTTOM LINE: The "Facts" of Faith need to be combined with an "Act" of Faith in order to produce strong "CONVICTIONS of FAITH" which are able to quench anything our adversary throws our way.