

The Whole Armor of God The Shield of Faith

Ephesians 6:16

The number one mistake being made in evangelicalism today is found right in this very subject of THE SHIELD OF FAITH.

Faith is talked about a lot.

Shield of Faith is even a popular name for churches now-a-days.

Much of what is said about faith for the Christian is good.

But the major mistake made by many is made right here -- with faith.

There is a simple truth that is not believed – and when this simple truth is not understood – or when it is denied – Christianity itself is in danger.

What is that simple truth???

FAITH is the GIFT of God!

Faith is GIVEN TO US by God!

It is not something natural.

It is not something possessed by all men.

It is not something we can stir up in a lost man

We can not convince him to believe.

We can not reason him into Heaven.

We can not stir up the innate goodness in him to combat the innate sinfulness – because he HAS NO INNATE goodness.

He is blind.

He is deaf.

HE IS DEAD.

Faith is VITAL TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Faith and repentance are the first visible signs that one IS a child of God.

There is a crucial question that we need to be able to answer.

What comes first regeneration or faith?

Ask that question to your Christian friends.

The answer to that question – will tell you just about everything you need to know about the theology and philosophy of the person you are talking with.

I. The Shield in Context 6:10-18

In our church, I preached 9 messages from this passage.
That wasn't being exhaustive at all.
That was taking a BROAD LOOK at the subject covered.

Paul is using a WAR analogy.

Notice the word STAND in v. 10-14.

It is the key word of the passage.
STAND against the wiles of the Devil.
WITHSTAND in the evil day.
Having done all – **TO STAND**.
STAND THEREFORE.

What does it mean TO STAND?

Stand **doesn't** mean – DON'T MOVE.
It **doesn't** mean REMAIN STATIONARY.

It's more like TAKING A STAND.
It involves BATTLE.

Think of *Custer's Last Stand*.
Or *The soldiers took their stand at the Alamo*.

Neither battle was very successful in the short run – but
that is the idea of STAND.

NO RETREAT.

You don't back off – you hold your ground and if you can you move forward.

The Armor is Explained v. 14-17.

All we can do is read them.

The belt – THE TRUTH of God's Word.

The breastplate – the breastplate of Christ's righteousness.

Our footwear – the gospel

RECEIVE the helmet of salvation

The Sword of the Spirit – which is the Word of God.

We are examining THE SHIELD this morning.

II. The Shield Explained

The Ephesians knew what a Roman soldier looked like.
They had seen many in their time.
That's why Paul uses the soldier as an illustration.

The shield mentioned here is in the Greek the *thureon*.
It sounds like the Greek word "door" and it was called that because of its rectangular shape and its size.
The shield was about 4 feet by 2.5 feet.
It was made of wood – covered in skins – and banded with metal.
It was slightly curved.

It was a great protective device – and struck terror into the heart of the enemy.
It wasn't highly mobile like the small shields you see in gladiator movies.
It was a great source of protection.

The soldier could crouch behind his shield.
It covered his whole body.
When the enemy was shooting flaming arrows – they could dip the shield in water and the fires would be extinguished.

The soldiers were trained to use their shields to their best advantage.

When attacking a city, the army could align themselves side by side, and the shields would form a wall – even when those inside the city were shooting at them.

They could even raise the shields over their heads, and protect themselves from objects being thrown and shot from above.

When the army would join forces and put their shields over their head, it resembled a giant tortoise. They could go right up to the walls of the city with no fear of harm.

We'll be alluding to these uses of the shield in a few moments, when we make some spiritual application.

III. Exegetical Analysis of v. 16

There is a common misconception about the grammar here.

“**Above all**” has been taken by many to mean “the most important thing”.
That is a misunderstanding of the meaning.

Here is another case of the Greek ruining some really fine sermons. ☺

Too often this phrase has been misunderstood by preachers.

-- ABOVE ALL take the shield of faith.

-- MORE THAN ANYTHING we need faith.

And this is EMPHASIZED.

More important than truth! – Pause.

-- Standing for the truth makes you dogmatic and cold.

-- We need FAITH to be warm.

Now, it's true that one can not be a Christian without faith.

But you also can not be a Christian without truth –

Without truth – who or what would you have faith IN?

And you can not be a Christian without the righteousness of Christ.

Are you going to trust in your own works?

Nor can one be a Christian without the gospel.

Faith cometh by hearing – and hearing by the Word of God.

Above all has the idea of *TO COVER ALL THE REST*.

That is what a shield does.

It is outside the other pieces of armor, and covers the rest of the armor.

Or maybe your translation says, “*IN ADDITION TO*” another good translation.

Take up or taking up

It's the 4th of a series of aorist participles.

Literally *having taken up*

It isn't an exhortation to HAVE faith.

Another easy misconception we can have.

It is an exhortation **to use** the faith you already have.

Duv **As** es the

you will be able

It's the second person PLURAL – future tense.

It's not just individualistic.

It's for ALL the church of God.

It's for the people of God together.

The Romans could lock their shields together to face the enemy – and the soldier was then safer than if he were in the field alone.

The Roman soldier was not meant to be alone.

He did not battle by himself.

He fought SIDE BY SIDE with his comrades.

When necessary he locked shields with his comrades.

TOGETHER they faced the enemy and prevailed.

These fiery darts are arrows that were dipped in pitch and then set on fire.

The wooden shields, covered with water-soaked leather could quench these darts.

IV. Application

1. Faith, like a shield, protects us from attacks

The attacks come in various forms.

The head

How does Satan attack the head?

False doctrine.

Wrong ideas about God.

Faith – properly used – protects us against heresy.

Who should trust God more – who should believe God MORE than the person who KNOWS and is CONVINCED from Scripture that God is in absolute control of all things?

When we know theology – when we know our God as revealed in the Scriptures, we are able to withstand, by faith, Satanic attacks.

Do you ever have doubts that God is real?

Do you ever have doubts that God is good?

Do you ever have doubts about the Scriptures?

Don't despair.

Don't conclude that you can't possibly be a Christian and have such vile doubts and thoughts.

Take the shield of faith!

WE BELIEVE!

*I know whom I have believed
And am persuaded that he is able
To keep that which I committed
Unto Him against that day.*

Those are the inspired words of Paul.
He would not have written them – if he had never experienced any doubts.

The arm

The enemy will cut at your arm to disable your service for Christ.
You need your arm to hold your sword
You need your arm to hold your shield.

But the shield used properly protects your arm from the sword-slings and flaming arrows hurled by Satan.

The feet

The enemy tries to trip you up in your daily life.
He tries to mislead you in the uprightness of your walk.
Faith protects your feet and causes you to stand fast in slippery places.

The knee

Prayer is vital to the Christian life.
Satan loves to battle prayerless Christians.
In reality – there are no PRAYERLESS Christians.
But all of us admit – we should pray more than we do.

Satan has other ways to discourage us in prayer.
He whispers that God does not hear.
He condemns our conscience, making us ashamed to come to God.

2. Faith, like a shield, receives the blows intended for the soldier

Some Christians think that faith should enable them to escape the enemy's blows.
Does a shield KEEP THE ARROWS from being fired?
No, a shield BLOCKS the arrows that ARE fired.
There is a wrong view of the shield of faith.

If they had enough faith – they would have no sickness
If they had enough faith – they would have plenty of money
If they had enough faith – they would have no more problems.
Why have armor if there are never going to be battles?
Why have a shield if no fiery darts are going to be hurled?

The armor is there **BECAUSE OF** the battle.

Faith can be hammered, pounded and battered.

Blow after blow can reign down upon it – but it is faith – and it protects.

God has not promised us an easy path to Heaven.

God has not promised a road with no trials.

God has not promised a war with no battles.

What he has promised – is a shield to protect you.

Faith – the Faith given by Him.

All the blows intended by Satan to land on us – land on it.

3. Faith, like a shield, is strong

The disciples cried out, “Lord, increase our faith.”

That’s the heart cry of a Christian.

Simple belief – or positive thinking – ANY shield made by men is like a shield made out of cardboard.

It might look good. It could be decorated real well.

It might be light and easy to handle.

What’s going to happen if a REAL FLAMING ARROW comes your way?

A cardboard shield. ☺

Can you imagine?

Here comes the flaming arrow!

Right through the shield and into the soldier.

A lot of televangelists praise FAITH.

They talk a lot about faith.

The faith they are talking about is not TRUE faith.

True faith may not look all that impressive.

It may not be decorated as well as the cardboard one.

But – which one would YOU rather be behind when the arrow comes?

4. Faith, like a shield, needs to be used

A belt is worn.
A breastplate isn't maneuvered.
A helmet stays put.
A shield is active.

What do you do in times of opposition? You believe God.
What do you do in times of temptation? You go to God.
What do you do in times of need? You believe God.

It's easy to believe when everything is going well.
True faith STANDS when the going is tough.

Remember how we said the Romans banded together and joined shields to form a wall?
We, as Christians, do the same.
We need each other.

Why do we ask one another to pray for each other?
It's one of the more normal acts of a Christian.
We join together in a local church.
We pray together.
We worship together.
We confess our faith, together.

Just like the Roman army – they would put their shields together to form a wall – that is what we do when we band together.

A Roman soldier, alone in the field, had some protection.
BUT – WHEN THEY CAME TOGETHER -- The Roman army – advancing on the enemy, locked side by side with one another -- shields in hand – it was a terrifying sight to the enemy – and caused many a city to surrender without a fight.

The gates of Hell will not be able to stand against God's church.

God has made His will known here in Ontario.
God has established a Church of Jesus Christ for Himself here in Ontario.
To the world – we are not all that impressive.
There are BIGGER churches and there are more impressive buildings.

But, don't think for a moment that SATAN is unconcerned.
Satan and the forces of darkness are FURIOUS with this endeavor.
They will do whatever they can do defeat us.

This is addressed in **v. 13 b.**

TO WITHSTAND in the **EVIL DAY**.

The evil day is not some future “tribulation”.

The evil day is the day of **SPECIAL** attack.

It is the attacks that Satan **WILL** make upon the church.

It manifests itself in many ways within a church.

Gossip – which is like cancer – tearing the life out of the young body.

Maybe **criticism and discontent** – don’t be the one the Devil uses to sow discord among the body.

BEWARE.

Sometimes it’s doctrinal error.

-- The CRC didn’t always ordain women.

-- Recently, the United Presbyterian Church just barely voted down a proposal to ordain homosexuals to the ministry. The next time it comes to a vote – don’t be surprised if it passes!

Church after church – denomination after denomination has fallen into grievous doctrinal error – often bringing upon themselves the judgment of God in writing **ICABOD** over their doorposts.

We need to make sure it never happens here.

STAND in the evil day with the **ARMOUR GOD GIVES!**

5. Without salvation, you have no armor at all

This is the Christian’s armor.

It is intended to protect us from the attacks of Satan and the world.

It is very effective armor.

As you will read in Pilgrim’s Progress – Apollyon was able to **ATTACK** Christian, but he could not defeat him.

However, if you are not a Christian – your greatest fear should not be Satan or the world.

You have an enemy that is **MUCH MORE POWERFUL.**

GOD Himself is your enemy.

You are at enmity with Him.

You are at war with Him.

By your refusal to bow to His kingship – you live in rebellion to Him.

There is no armor in the universe that can protect you from the wrath of God.
God gives spiritual armor to His children – but those that are not his children will have no place or hope of protection at the last day.

All will stand before Him – totally exposed and vulnerable.

My friend – today is the day of salvation.
THIS is the time God has ordained for men to be saved.
Will you bow your heart to Jesus Christ and acknowledge HIM to be your king?

PRAY

HYMN 493

Benediction – please be seated.

Haywood and Francine.
Todd and Julie Hurst, with Josie and Abbie.