

The Spiritual Armor part 6

“The Shield of Faith”

Eph.6:16

Satan’s primary activity in your life is to destroy your faith. As long as you are behind the shield of faith, he can’t touch you. But if he can get you out from behind that shield, or destroy the shield, he can bring all kinds of devastation in your life. Here are some of his methods, and some ways to protect yourself against them.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 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.

13 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. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 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. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Review: Truth, Righteousness & The Gospel

The first piece of armor is the belt of truth.

Stand firm then, having gird yourself with the belt of truth.

It’s the starting point of protecting ourselves against Satan’s main weapon – error and lies. You put on the belt of truth by becoming transparent and honest, by learning the truth of Scripture, and by accepting, embracing and loving that truth.

The next piece of armor is righteousness.

Stand firm then...having put on the breastplate of righteousness

Put on goodness as measured by the character and desires of God, and that will protect you against future sin and it will protect the Church.

Next come the shoes.

Stand firm then...15 having fitted your feet with the readiness¹ of the gospel of peace.

Be particularly prepared with respect to the Gospel, because it’s the focus of Satanic attack. Be strong in your understanding and articulation of it, and be committed to its purpose (peace with God and one another).

Importance of the shield

We’ve looked at the first half of the 6 pieces of armor--this morning we come to the 4th piece. Paul does some things in v.16 to show us that this one is to be especially emphasized. For one thing, he starts out the verse with the phrase “in everything.”² The NIV translates it “In addition to all this”, but more likely it just means “in every circumstance.”³ However you translate it, all the commentators agree that the purpose is to emphasize the

¹ Here he doesn’t even mention the piece of armor, which would be shoes, or boots. They are just implied. Instead of saying “Put on the shoes of readiness,” he just says “put on readiness.” Maybe because he already has enough genitives, and it would be too many to say “the shoes OF the readiness OF the Gospel OF peace.”

² Greek ἐν παντι

³ I am somewhat hesitant to differ with the NIV here, because the commentators mostly agree with the NIV. But I looked up all 23 occurrences of this phrase in the NT, and it always means “in every circumstance” or “in every person.” It never means “in addition.”

importance of this piece of armor. In addition, he says twice as much about this piece of armor as he says about any other piece. He allots an average of 6 or 7 words to each of the other pieces, with the feet receiving the maximum at 9 words. However, he uses 18 words to talk about the shield. Finally, this is the only piece of armor that comes with a promise. Paul doesn't say anything about the effect any of the other pieces will have, but here he promises us that with the shield we will be able not only to extinguish flaming arrows, but that we will be able to extinguish *all* the flaming arrows.

Each of the pieces is fundamental in some way, but if we had to pick one that is most crucial, it seems like it would be the shield of faith, because what good are the other pieces without faith? What good is the belt of truth going to be to you if you don't even believe the truth, or the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God? What good is the Gospel of peace—the message of salvation by grace through faith—if you don't have faith? If salvation and righteousness comes through faith alone, how could you have the helmet of salvation or the breastplate of righteousness without faith? Faith is a prerequisite for all of these others to be effective.

Faith in Ephesians

We could spend months studying the topic of faith, but that would be beyond the scope of this study. What we can do is take a look at what Paul has said about faith so far in Ephesians, where it is only mentioned three times. However, while the word “faith” is only used three times, it plays an incredibly important role because of what is said about it.

In the book of Ephesians, faith is always the means by which we gain access to the benefits of salvation. Consider the following verses:

- **Eph.2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith**
- **Eph.3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.**
- **Eph.3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.**

Note that

1. we are saved only through faith;
2. we approach God only through faith;
3. the powerful presence of God dwells in our lives only through faith.

I think lot of people don't realize that last one. They know salvation is by faith, but they don't realize God's presence to bless in your life, and God's empowerment in your life, is also through faith alone.

So, you can see why Satan would want to attack your faith. Without faith, you get none of the benefits of salvation, in fact, you don't get salvation at all. God is accomplishing His eternal purposes in this world, and He's doing it through the Church...and when He looks down on earth to find a headquarters to be the center of His powerful activity to bless in the Church, He chooses the heart of faith. And the more faith you have, the more powerfully God works through you. No amount of creativity, skill, talent, training, knowledge, experience or hard work will make your ministry successful for eternal purposes unless you have faith. But if you do have strong faith, no matter what your experience or IQ or personality type or financial circumstances, no matter what things you have going against you, nothing will be able to stop the awesome power of God in your life.

Importance of Faith in Scripture

It's only by faith that you will ever accomplish anything worthwhile. In hall of faith, that long list of people in 1 Cor.11 who pleased God, every paragraph starts with the words, “By faith...” There are no verses that say, “This thing wasn't done by faith, but it was still pretty good.” That would be to contradict the whole point of the chapter, because v.6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. Anything that is not of faith is sin. There is no such thing as something that is good that doesn't come from faith – faith is the only way to please God. In 2 Peter 1:5-9, everything that is important in the Christian life (goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love) all start with faith.

So, in comes volley after volley of burning, fiery arrows of doubt and fear designed to destroy that faith.
Stand firm...16 having taken up the shield of faith, with which you can (lit. will be able to) extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Degrees of Faith

Now that we understand the importance of faith, let's take a look at the definition of faith. Faith is not just an issue at conversion; we are to be growing in our faith all through our lives. But as you live the Christian life, there are degrees of faith. Scripture talks about weak faith, little faith, firm faith, great faith, and others. According to 2 Cor.10:15 the whole objective of the ministry of the Apostles was to cause the people's faith to grow. That's the normal process of the Christian life – for your faith to grow and progress and strengthen. In fact, in order for you to ultimately go to heaven God requires that you have a persevering faith that is strong enough to remain all the way to the end of your life.

- **1 Cor.15:2** By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.
- **Col.1:22-23** But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—**23** if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.
- **Heb.3:14** We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

There is such a thing as a faith that doesn't persevere.

Luke 8:13-14 Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. Strengthening and building your faith is a huge priority in the Christian life.

An act of the will.

Like any virtue, faith is a gift from God.

1 Cor 4:7 What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Every good thing we have, including faith, was given to us as a gift from God. However, the responsibility to have faith lies squarely on our own shoulders. There are some gifts from God that are not seen as human actions. For example, justification is not a human action. It's something that God does alone. The same goes for imputation or regeneration or enlightenment. Faith, however, is seen in Scripture as a human action; a gift from God, but also a human action that we are responsible for doing.

Acts 16:30-31 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" **31** They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved"

Therefore, faith is something you do. It involves an act of your will. Further examples include:

- **John 7:31** many in the crowd put their faith in him.
- **John 8:30** Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.
- **John 11:45-46** many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.

So we see that Faith is a gift from God, but it is also a human action. And so if there is no faith in your heart, or weak faith or little faith, God holds you responsible for that.

- **Matt 14:31** "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"
- **Mark 4:40** He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

So believing is our responsibility, and that belief goes way deeper than just being convinced of something. Having faith in God means living in a trusting relationship with Him; it's an act of the will, where you let your full weight rest in Him. You are biased toward Him and His Word, you are oriented toward Him, and you are inclined toward His will and His desires.

The perfect synergism between you and God – the perfect relational interaction – is that you depend and He supplies. He supplies and gets glory, you depend and get grace. That's why God is pleased when we depend on Him and trust Him and He is angered when we try to pay Him back or help Him. He is the only provider and supplier, and when we acknowledge Him as such, that glorifies Him. When we try to pretend we are supplying or providing, we steal His glory, that dishonors Him. The more needy and helpless I am in relationship to God, the more glorified He is, and so the ideal way to relate to God is through faith.

Having faith in God and loving God are very close concepts. Faith is an incredibly personal, relational thing. Think of how it feels when someone you love doesn't trust you. There have been times in our marriage when I have lied to Tracy. When I confessed to her, there was a period of time – a lengthy period, when I had to try to win back her trust. Winning back trust is a very difficult thing to do, and it takes a lot of time. And during that time, it was a very sad and humiliating time for me. I knew I didn't deserve her trust, but the fact that I didn't have it still really hurt, and was very hard to take. When she began to trust me again, I received that as a wonderful gesture of love. Trust and love are not exactly the same thing, but they are so tightly woven and interlocked together, that at many points they are hard to distinguish.

Why flaming arrows? Satan is after your shield

Now that we understand the importance of faith and the definition of faith, let's turn our attention now to the threats to faith.

Note how specific Paul is about how the shield works. The Roman soldiers had more than one kind of shield. There were the little round ones they carried while fighting, but that's not what is referred to here. The word used here refers to a very large one. It comes from the word “door,” and it really was like carrying a door. It was 4 ft tall by 2½ ft wide, and the soldier could hide his entire body behind it. In fact, the people back then were much smaller than people in our culture, so a shield that size would provide total protection.

The purpose of these shields was to protect against all kinds of weapons – arrows, spears, swords, projectiles, etc. The main purpose was to protect against arrows. What intrigued me this week is the fact that Paul specifies flaming arrows. In a section like this, that is a surprisingly specific detail to include. One of the things that makes this whole section so hard to interpret is the fact that Paul is so non-specific about each piece of armor. He gives very little information, and leaves everything very general, and so it's significant that on this piece of armor he not only gives this explanation, but he applies it to something so specific – flaming arrows. Why flaming arrows? And notice what the shield does. He doesn't say you need the shield of faith to block the arrows, or deflect the arrows; he says the role of the shield is to extinguish the arrows. The more I thought about it, the more I got to wondering – why did they even use flaming arrows against soldiers? I can understand using them in attacking a city, where you are trying to burn things down, but why against a foot soldier? If you hit a man with an ordinary arrow, you've pretty much dispatched him. What does it matter if he gets burned while he bleeds to death? Why take all the extra time and trouble to put pitch on the arrow and then lighting it before firing it? You could shoot far more arrows without doing that, and yet they did do it. Why?

As I researched this question, I found that flaming arrows weren't used all that often against foot soldiers but when they were, the purposes were as follows:

1. To start fires around the soldiers. They would use them to either start grass or trees on fire, to force the soldiers to run, or they would try to start the shield on fire. When the Roman soldiers set their shields up in a line, making a wall, they were pretty much impervious to attack, and so if they could get those shields burning, obviously the soldier would abandon it, and he would be utterly defenseless and vulnerable.
2. To intimidate the soldiers. This is the reason that came up most often. Flaming arrows scare the daylights out of people. It would be scary enough having volleys of arrows flying at you, but evidently, it's far more intimidating to have flaming ones flying at you. They made a frightening sound as they went through the air, and they made the air attack seem much more dangerous. If you look at a volley of arrows coming at you, you probably won't see many of them, but if they are all on fire, then you see every one of them, and it's much more intimidating. The goal was to get the soldier so frightened that he would leave his shield and run, and then he would be easy pickings for the archers.

So in both cases, the goal was to get the soldier out behind the protection of his shield.

So with all that in mind, what was Paul's purpose in describing Satan's attacks as burning arrows? It seems to me the point is that Satan is after your shield; he wants to get you out from behind that shield. He wants to either light it on fire, so it burns up, or intimidate you to the point where you will abandon it, but one way or another he has to get you out from behind that shield.

You can imagine how frustrating it must have been for armies who fought against the Romans. You go into battle with all your arrows and spears, you let them fly, and they just jump behind their big doors until you've shot them all. I read of one account where a soldier by the name of Sceva ended up with 220 arrows in his

shield after one battle. You can see why opposing armies developed strategies to get them out from behind the protection of those shields. Satan experiences that same frustration. As long as you are behind the shield of faith, what can Satan do to you? He doesn't have any weapons that can penetrate that. As long as you are believing the truth and you are in a trusting relationship with God, what can Satan do to harm you? He can bring suffering, but if you are believing the truth and trusting God, all suffering will do is benefit you --as long as you are believing the truth, he won't be able to convince you of a lie. Or, when he tries to convince you that some sin is worth it, you won't believe him. And so he's left with nothing; he can't do anything to harm you.

Peter made the same point with a different analogy.

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith

Normally if you try to resist a roaring lion, you get devoured, but this particular roaring lion can't devour faith. Satan is a like a roaring lion that can devour anything but faith, so instead of telling us to run, Peter tells us to stand firm in faith.

1 John 5:4 This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Our enemy is extremely powerful, but he is absolutely powerless against faith, and so when you have the shield of faith, he puts all his energy into attacking that. That's why so many doubts come into you head regarding the things of God, and you don't have nearly as many doubts about lesser things. There are plenty of things in life that are much less sure than Scripture, and we don't doubt those things at all, yet we are constantly plagued with doubt regarding Scripture. That's because not all our doubts are just natural thoughts that arise in our minds; they are deliberate flaming arrows designed for a very specific purpose and fired at us by a personal enemy with specific intentions behind them. He wants to keep you from faith. He will try to either destroy your shield of faith, or get you to abandon it.

The two tools he uses to do that are doubt and fear. He uses doubt to try to burn up your shield, so that your faith disintegrates right in your hand, or he uses intimidation to get you to just abandon your shield altogether.

Doubt

If you study ancient warfare you'll find that there are a huge number of recipes for various kinds of incendiary elements they put on burning arrows. They worked hard to design substances that would burn hotter and hotter, and that would have a splatter effect when they hit. The idea was to keep inflicting damage after the arrow hit. A plain arrow, once it came to rest somewhere – unless it was in someone's body – did nothing, but a burning arrow would keep doing it's job until it was extinguished. That's the way Satan fights. He doesn't just want to deliver a blow—he wants to start a fire. When the enemy hits you with a doubt, he doesn't just lob some arrow your way hoping your shield is down at that moment. He wants to get that shield smoldering, so more damage keeps being done long after the initial attack.

Have you noticed that when doubts come into your mind regarding the faith, they don't just disappear on their own after a few seconds? They linger and fester and gnaw away at your faith. That's the effect of a burning arrow. Therefore, it's not enough to just duck behind the shield for a moment. The fire needs to be put out. When doubts come into your mind, don't just suppress them—extinguish them.

One way people suppress doubts is by relying on blind faith. A doubt arises in their mind, and they just say, “I don't want to think about that. I don't want to look into it and risk having to change my belief system.” We don't want to upset the apple cart, so we just pretend the doubt isn't there. All that does is give that doubt a chance to burn holes through your faith, and you don't notice the damage until years later when you realize your faith isn't half the strength it used to be. Those smoldering doubts that you just suppress and ignore will eventually have a combined effect over time that will make it impossible for you to trust God.

How to extinguish doubt

This verse tells us exactly how to extinguish doubt – with the shield of faith. After a few burnt shields, it didn't take the Romans long to figure out that that was a point of vulnerability. And so they took some precautions. They would put thick leather over the wooden shield, and would then soak that in water before the battle. A good shield is a shield that will actually extinguish a flaming arrow. And that's the way the shield of

faith is. True faith extinguishes doubt, because faith is trusting the trustworthy. If you put your confidence in something/someone who isn't trustworthy, that's not faith; It's foolishness. Faith is trusting the trustworthy.

You may have heard this illustrated with ice on a lake. You can have full confidence in thin ice, and no matter how much confidence you have, you will break through. That kind of faith doesn't do any good. It won't hold you up, because it's not trust in an object that's worthy of trust. On the other hand, if the ice is 10 ft. thick and could hold a semi truck, if you don't have enough confidence in it to come out and stand on it, then it doesn't do you any good either. For faith to be a good thing, the object of your faith has to be trustworthy, and you have to have knowledge of and confidence in that trustworthiness.

Is the ice thick for us? Is God trustworthy? Is His Word reliable? Yes! The ice is plenty thick. So how do we convince ourselves of that? How do we come to the point of having great confidence in that? There are three important steps:

1. Verify that the Bible is God's Word. There are a number of ways to verify that something is trustworthy. You can make a strict scientific test - drill a hole in the ice and see how thick it is.
2. You can use logic. If you see a semi driving on the ice, that's pretty good evidence that it could hold you. So you could use science or logic. But most things we believe we don't believe for those reasons.
3. Relying on the testimony of a trustworthy authority. If someone has demonstrated that he knows everything there is to know about the condition of that ice, and he loves you, and he tells you it's perfectly safe, you wouldn't hesitate.

The third method is the method we use for the vast majority of things we believe. You don't believe the moon is miles away because you measured it yourself; you believe it because of the testimony of reliable authorities. If the orthodontist tells you your kid needs braces, you don't go to orthodontist school to learn to diagnose it yourself to verify it. You just believe a reliable authority.

Consider scientists. The vast majority of what every scientist believes he believes not based on his own tests, but based on his faith in other authorities. (Of all the scientists in the world, how many of them have actually measured the speed of light themselves? And yet they all believe it's 186,000 miles per second) Most of what we believe we believe because of reliable testimony, and I think that's the best approach with Christianity.

Step 1 – Have confidence in God's word.

If you are going to try to get all your questions answered before you believe something, you can never believe anything. But if you can get enough of your questions answered to establish that the Bible is God's Word, then you can trust what it says, whether your questions are answered or not. How do you know if the Bible is God's Word? The short answer is, you look into the evidence that Jesus is a reliable authority, because Jesus believed the Bible to be the Word of God. And you can demonstrate Jesus to be a reliable authority because of His resurrection from the dead. (And you can prove that He rose from the dead without assuming the Bible is God's Word.) So any doubt you ever have goes back to whether or not Jesus rose from the dead. You don't have to prove everything in the Bible, you just have to prove one thing – the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that proves everything else in the Bible. That's the short answer.

The long answer is spelled out in the book "The Case for Christ," which makes an incredibly compelling case for the reliability of the Bible.

So, the first thing you do about doubt is strengthen your confidence in the trustworthiness of the authority you are trusting. But that, by itself, is not enough.

Step 2 -- Expose yourself to the Word

Ro.10:17 tells us how to get faith. It doesn't say, "Faith comes through investigation." It says that faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Faith involves a lot more than just the intellect; it involves your whole spirit. The way to build and strengthen your spirit, once you have established that Scripture is trustworthy, is to expose yourself to the life changing, life giving, strengthening sustenance that comes from the Word of God. The first time a doubt comes into your mind, you need to examine the evidence and establish the foundation for your faith. But once you have done that, there is no need to keep doing it every time you have a doubt. That's what keeps people from reaching maturity. When you are

trying to become an engineer you go through the basic proofs of mathematics and learn the formulas. But when you get into higher math, if you keep doubting the formulas, so that before solving a complex equation you have to go back and redo all the proofs, you would never even be able to finish a single equation. In the same way, if you want to ever move on to maturity, you are going to have to come to a point of trusting what you've learned in the past.

Heb 5:11-14 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

They are immature. So what's the solution?

Heb 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation

The solution to their immaturity was to leave the basics. That doesn't mean forsake them, but rather move beyond them.

If Satan can stall you out on the basics forever, he knows you'll never advance to maturity, and you'll always be weak against him. So, if you struggle with doubt, first verify the trustworthiness of Scripture, and, once you have done that, don't entertain those doubts anymore. Dismiss them from your mind, and move on to maturity. Whenever they come into your mind, turn your attention to the words of Scripture, and that will build your faith.

There is one more ingredient. It's not enough to just research the reliability of Scripture and then read Scripture; you can do both of those things and still fall into unbelief. Faith is not just a matter of the mind and the ears, but it's also a matter of the will.

Step 3 -- Be willing to believe

The reason most people don't believe is because they are not willing to believe. I think most of us underestimate the effect our desires have on our belief system. Most people who reject the Bible do so not because of a lack of evidence, but because they don't want it to be true. Jesus said to the Pharisees,

John 8:45 because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

The reason they didn't believe was because Jesus was speaking truth. That's not to say they consciously thought, "We are only willing to believe lies." What it means is that in their hearts, there was not a willingness to accept the truth. Rather, they were inclined and biased toward the lies of Satan. That is a danger for all of us. We want to justify certain sins, or escape certain hard truths (or perhaps we are just too lazy to face the fact that we may be wrong about something) and so there is an unwillingness to accept truth, which translates to a bias toward the lies of Satan. The direction you are inclined will determine most of what you believe.

Finally, don't just research, don't just read the Bible and listen to preaching; do those things with an inclination toward the truth, and a willingness to accept what God is saying no matter what it costs you. If you do those things, the result will be strong faith, and that will extinguish the flaming arrows of doubt.

Fear

There is another purpose for flaming arrows. Recall that one purpose was to burn up your shield through doubt. The other thing that was accomplished by flaming arrows was fear – getting the soldier to abandon his shield through fear.

If they couldn't burn up your shield, they would use flaming arrows anyway to scare you into leaving your shield and making a run for it. The soldier was safe behind the shield, but he didn't feel very safe. When you hear the sound of those flaming arrows, and feel them smashing into your shield, and see the wall of fire coming at you from the sky, you don't feel very safe, even though you are. If you just believe what God has said, you are absolutely impervious to attack, but it doesn't seem that way when the arrows are flying.

Satan will try to destroy your shield of faith through doubt, or he will try to get you to just drop it through fear. He will try to make you afraid to trust God's Word for big issues. He wants you to think, "I'll trust these

religious solutions for the little problems in my life, but when the really big time things come, I'd better resort to human wisdom – just to be safe. I don't want to leave serious, life and death type issues up to a 2000 year old book – I need professional help."

Satan wants you to live your life like an inexperienced pilot who will trust the instrument panel only as long as it coincides with what he senses to be right. Once in a while you hear about a plane that crashed because the pilot feels like the plane is doing one thing, but the instruments say something else, and he just can't bring himself to trust his instruments over how he feels. God's Word is the instrument panel, and the way things appear from the perspective of our human wisdom is very often way off – because you can't see the spiritual realm. God calls us to live by faith and not by sight. Live your life as a person who is 100% convinced that those things are true. Don't be the kind of person who says, "Yes, I can see that the Bible says that. But I'm waiting to decide if I really believe it. Once it's verified in my own experience, then I'll believe it." Nor should you think, "Once I can see that it's compatible with what the naturalistic scientists believe, then I'll accept it." Once you've established that the Bible is God's Word, it's irrational to ever question it. You can question an interpretation, you can question an application, and even a translation (if you know Greek or Hebrew), but once it's clear that the Bible is saying something, don't ever question that – believe it.

And don't just believe it, but live your life based on that belief. Real faith doesn't hedge its bets. The person who says, "I'll stand on God's Word with one foot, but keep the other foot planted solidly in my own human wisdom" does not display a heart of faith. The presence of Christ is not going to dwell in a powerful way in that person. God calls you to make such a wholesale, headlong plunge into the Christian life that if the Bible turned out to be wrong, your life would be a complete disaster. You should have everything riding on the fact that God's Word is true – everything.

Ask yourself, what would you lose if the Gospel turned out not to be true? Have you hedged your bets so much that there would be no real loss? Or would you lose everything?

Paul said, in Gal.2:2 and 1 Cor.15 that if it turned out he was wrong about the Gospel – his whole life would be in vain. Every nook and cranny of his life would be a complete loss, and he would be the most pitiful disaster on two legs. His whole life would be a total loss, because every single thing Paul did, he did for the cause of the Gospel. Jesus demands that if you are going to follow Him, you have to put all of your eggs in His basket – every last one. When people came to Him wanted to follow Him, but also retain some security in this world – some ties to the old life, Jesus sent them away.

Blondin said to the crowd, "Who believes I can take a person across Niagara Falls in a wheelbarrow on a tightrope?" Everyone cheered. "We all believe!" But then, when he asked for volunteers, they weren't so enthusiastic. It's not faith until you get into the wheelbarrow.

The great missionary John Payton was translating the Bible for the South Sea Islanders, and he found that there was no word in their language for faith or trust. He was stuck. How do you translate the Bible without that word? One day, as he was in his hut working on the problem of how to convey the idea of faith to those people, one of the natives came running, up the stairs, and into his hut. He plopped himself down in Payton's study in a chair, and in that native language he said, "It's so good to rest my whole weight in this chair." John Payton said, "I had my word." Faith is resting your whole weight on God. That phrase that entered into a translation of the Scriptures that brought the entire civilization of natives to Christ.

The Christian life is the struggle to lift your feet off the floor and put your whole weight on God. Are you willing to do that? It will cost you everything. Are you afraid to put all your eggs in that basket? If you are, look again at this verse. You don't need to be afraid of the shield—be afraid of the flaming arrows if you are without the shield. Don't be afraid of entrusting everything to God and His Word.

Isa 41:10-13 He says do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. 11 "All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish. 12 Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all. 13 For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

Benediction:

Heb.10:19-22 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus... and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.

Review Questions:

1. How does faith protect you?
It renders useless Satan's weapons (lies)
2. What is the significance of the flaming arrows?
Those were used to get the soldiers out from behind their shields. Satan is after your faith.