

Life in the Combat Zone

The Shield of Faith

Ephesians 6:10-16

June 20, 2020

With the Belt of Truth holding everything together – the Breastplate of Righteousness protecting our hearts – and the Shoes of Gospel Peace laced up, let's move to the 4th piece of combat gear – **The Shield of Faith**.

Why is **Faith** found in the position of "*The Shield*"?

2 types of Roman Shields:

- **Parma** – A smaller round shield used by soldiers on horseback.
- **Legionaire Scutum "Great Scuta"** – Shaped like a door, which completely covered the soldier – providing protection for his whole body – especially in a kneeling position. It was made of multiple layers of thick hide, which was oiled regularly to keep it soft, tough and durable. The shields could also be linked together protecting an entire group of soldiers {**Tortoise Formation - protected the group from frontal attacks and projectiles launched from above - commonly used in a siege situation**}.

Ephesians 6:16 - In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you will be empowered to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Take up:

In addition to everything else you have put on; Paul says you must also **take up** the Shield of Faith. **Take up** is an active word. There is intention behind it - Christian faith is not passive – It's active. As with every other piece of combat gear, it does no good if it is hanging in the closet – **Thou art crunchy and taste good with ketchup.....** You have to tighten your **Belt**, adjust your **Breastplate**, lace up your **Shoes** and take up your **Shield**. ---- **Hebrews 11**

- The world says “creation” took millions of years and I am descended from a monkey – God says it took Him 6 days to create and He intentionally made me – **By Faith** I believe God is telling the truth.
- Noah had never seen rain – God told him to build an ark – **By Faith** Noah believed God was telling the truth and built an ark.
- In 75 years, Abram had never left his home town – God said move to a place I will show you – **By Faith** Abram believed God was telling the truth and he went.
- Sarah was 90 years old – God told her she'd have a son – **By Faith** Sara believed God was telling the truth and Isaac was born.
- Joseph believed Israel would one day leave Egypt – **By Faith** he instructed that his bones be taken back to Canaan – they were.

In Hebrews chapter 12, the scene shifts from a faith history lesson to a Greco-Roman racetrack. The readers of the letter are no longer spectators, they are participants in the race of faith. They're panting, sweating, stumbling and thirsty – it's a long race and some are even thinking of quitting.

But wait, can you hear it... GO! GO!! GO!! GO!!! Don't give up!! Keep going!!! Louder and louder and louder until the whole stadium is shaking.

- **Hebrews 12:1-2** - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Ironman has been called “the ultimate test of human endurance”. It is a race consisting of a 2.4 mile ocean swim + 112 mile bike ride + 26.2 mile run {Youtube - Kona 2016}

If you want to be an Ironman Triathlete you train... hard. You don't sit around eating Twinkies --- you train everyday – for hours. You change the way you eat and sleep. That one goal becomes a 24/7 365 commitment – not for winning the race – just for the hope of competing.

In an Ironman race, if you cross the finish line you **ARE** an Ironman – even if you're the last one to cross the line!

{I love to watch Ironman..... on my couch..... eating Twinkies!!}

Taking the Shield of Faith means believing God is telling the truth which leads to action.

Shield of Faith:

There seems to be a great deal of misunderstanding about faith:

- Nothing more than positive thinking.
- A set of Doctrines or religious beliefs
- A leap into the dark unknown.
- A way to make God do what we want.

Christian Faith is directly tied to the Truth and Faithfulness of God – **Who** He is, **What** He says is true, **What** He's done, **What** He has promised to do and **What** His heart is toward you {For God so loved...}.

Faith is only as good as the object of that faith. Christian Faith means placing my trust in God's Faithfulness – not church association – not our parents or our pastor or our best friend.... I place my trust in God because I have a personal relationship with Him through Jesus.

Because our enemy changes his tactics as we grow and learn how to use our armor, we need to make sure that our armor is battle ready, which means always being tapped into the source – Jesus.

- **Proverbs 30:5** - Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

Satan doesn't just go after individual's; he goes after congregations and he often uses siege warfare to do it. Because we don't see him for what he is, he is often very successful at destroying churches. However, when Christians come together and link their shields of faith they become an impenetrable wall - facing Satan together is a whole lot better than trying to face him alone – when lions and wolves attack, they try to separate the herd, but when the heard stands their ground together, they are safe.

Faith Quotes:

- Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. – Hebrews 11:1
- Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. – Martin Luther King
- Faith takes God without any ifs. – D.L. Moody
- Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading. – Oswald Chambers
- Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time. – Oswald Chambers
- Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a **KNOWN** God. – Corrie Ten Boom
- Christian faith is not abstract knowledge or a mystical experience, but a dynamic way of living – walking as Jesus walked – Angel Manuel Rodriguez

Empowered to Extinguish:

The 2 Greek words {doo'- nam - ahee} “**be of power**” and {sben'- noo -mee} “**to quench by dousing or to extinguish by drowning in water**” – literally mean to be empowered to extinguish by water.

Before every battle a Roman Soldier would soak his shield in water because one of the weapons of war at the time was the flaming arrow. Then, because the shield was so heavy, he would attach it to his belt with a clip. In that way the soldier was protected because his shield was connected to his belt providing the anchor needed to give “**power**” to the water saturated shield to extinguish the fiery arrows of the enemy. Paul is connecting the fire-extinguishing ability of the water-soaked shield to **FAITH**:

Our Faith is only a Shield when it is attached to our source of Life {Jesus}. If Jesus is absent our faith will also be absent and we will be unable to withstand the unrelenting fiery assaults of the devil – **WE MUST BE ATTACHED TO JESUS**. Then when our lives are soaked through with Jesus, we are given His power and our **Shield of Faith** becomes an impenetrable wall of defense.

- **Psalm 36:9** - For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.
- **Isaiah 44:3** - For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.
- **Jeremiah 2:13** - My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

- **John 4:10-14** - Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water..... whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
- **John 7:37-38** - On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."
- **JC Ryle {Holiness 317}**: Christ is that Fountain of Living Water which God has graciously provided for thirsty souls. From Him there flows an abundant stream for all who travel through the wilderness of this world. There is an endless supply of all that men can need – pardon, absolution, mercy, grace, peace, rest, relief, comfort, and hope. It is His office to receive sinners. It is His pleasure to give them pardon, life and peace. And the words of the text are a proclamation He makes to all mankind – "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink"

Soak your faith in the Word of God. Let the Water so saturate your life that you will have the power to move forward even under the most savage attack.

Flaming Arrows:

The 2 Greek words {poo - rō' - o} "*to be ignited, burn fiery, be on fire*" and {bel' - os} "*missile*" - refer to an arrow whose tip has been wrapped with flax or hemp, soaked in flammable fluid and set on fire.

Satan realizes that if we have a strong faith, he does not stand a chance, so his top priority is to undermine our faith. If he can shake our confidence in God and His faithfulness or if he can confuse us or distract us from God's promises, he knows that he can have his way with us - He has nothing to fear.

Satan uses people as fiery arrows – Notice Job's friends:

- **Eliphaz** – The innocent people don't suffer, only the wicked do – therefore you must be wicked.
- **Bildad** – Your children got what they deserve and if you were really upright, God would be blessing you.
- **Zophar** – You're actually getting far less than you deserve.
- **Job** – I don't understand and I'm really mad about it, HOWEVER, "*even if God kills me, I am going to trust him and continue to put my hope in him.*" {Job 13:15}

The devil will try to get us to think God doesn't love us because times are hard and people are hurtful – Our trust in God should not depend on what we face. We have faith in the faithfulness of God REGARDLESS OF our circumstances.

Satan uses doubt and fear as fiery arrows:

- **1 Samuel 17:8-11** - Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. ⁹ If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." ¹⁰ Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." ¹¹ **On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.** {40 days - Israel had lost and there hadn't been a battle yet}
- **1 Samuel 17:26-37** - David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?".... Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. ³⁷ **The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.**"

God is bigger than any person or problem you face. Nothing is too big for God!! It is when we act like God is telling the truth that problems and people become small. Obstacles become opportunities to trust God's ability to save, protect, provide, restore and sustain us. Your problems are no problem for God!

Satan used fiery arrows against Jesus {Matthew 16:21-23 and Luke 4:1-14}:

- **Ellen White {DA 686-693}** - As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. **In the wilderness of temptation, the destiny of the human race had been at stake. Christ was then conqueror. Now the tempter had come for the last fearful struggle. For this he had been preparing during the three years of Christ's ministry.** Everything was at stake with him. If he failed here, his hope of mastery was lost; the kingdoms of the world would finally become Christ's; he himself would be overthrown and cast out. **But if Christ could be overcome, the earth would become Satan's kingdom, and the human race would be forever in his power. With the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ's soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God.** **And what was to be gained by this sacrifice?** How hopeless appeared the guilt and ingratitude of men! In its hardest features Satan pressed the situation upon the Redeemer: **The people who claim to be above all others in temporal and spiritual advantages have rejected You. They are seeking to destroy You,** the foundation, the center and seal of the promises made to them as a peculiar people. **One of Your own disciples**, who has listened to Your instruction, and has been among the foremost in church activities, **will betray You. One of Your most zealous followers will deny You. All will forsake**

You. Christ's whole being abhorred the thought. That those whom He had undertaken to save, those whom He loved so much, should unite in the plots of Satan, this pierced His soul. The conflict was terrible. Its measure was the guilt of His nation, of His accusers and betrayer, the guilt of a world lying in wickedness. The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God's wrath against sin was crushing out His life.

.... But now the history of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself. He accepts His baptism of blood, that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life. He has left the courts of heaven, where all is purity, happiness, and glory, to save the one lost sheep, the one world that has fallen by transgression. And He will not turn from His mission. He will become the propitiation of a race that has willed to sin....

Satan will use fiery arrows against you too. He is not sitting on his couch eating Twinkies.... He's working on ways to destroy you **AND** no matter how many flaming arrows he fires at you, your **Shield of Faith** can extinguish them all.

Wrapping Up

In any battle we need to know our enemy...

- **1 Peter 5:8** - ... Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

and have confidence in our Commander.

- **Proverbs 3:5-6** - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.
- **2 Timothy 1:12** - ... I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

We wage spiritual warfare with the unbreakable knowledge that our Commander is unbeatable and will bring us to victory. "**Like the Spartans, every Christian is born a warrior**" (Spurgeon). We take hold of Christ by faith, and with our faith firmly in place, we face the foe.

- **2 Corinthians 10:3-4** - For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.
- **1 Peter 1:3-5** - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.