

The Armor – the shield:

Ephesians 6:16

16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

Recap

We return to looking at the Armor of God as Paul outlined in the book of Ephesians.

It is important to remember that we are told to take up this armor by the Apostle.

This is not something that is given to us by God.

This is not something we naturally develop ourselves, but this is something that we have to actively pursue.

Take up: means to pick, to raise, to pick up something to use it.

These qualities that are listed here by Paul are qualities that we are to develop in our character in order to overcome the desire of Satan to destroy the children of God.

Think about it.....how do you stand against deception or heresy? You know truth. You know what you believe. That way the devil has no room in your heart of mind and no way to lead you astray.

How do you face moral temptation in an increasingly godless world? You train yourself to be a right-doer, you put on righteousness.

This gospel gives us a peace that gives us a firm foundation in a shaky and fearful world.

And now we come to the character quality of faith.

Remember these are not things we put on, but qualities that we develop.

Introduction:

Every generation is defined by the qualities that it exhibits and has shown under pressure and over time.

We have had the pioneering generations.

We have had the generation that learned to thrive in the years of the great depression.

We had the generations that fought in the wars that defined our age.

Each of these generations had qualities and characteristics that defined them.

One of the pervasive marks of our times is emotional fragility.

We as a generation are so easily hurt.

We pout and mope easily.

We break easily.

Our marriages break easily.

Our faith breaks easily.

Our happiness breaks easily.

And our commitment to the church breaks easily.

We are easily disheartened, and it seems we have little capacity for surviving and thriving in the face of criticism, opposition or spiritual attack.

A typical emotional response that many of my peers have had trouble with in the church is to think, *"If that's the way they feel about me, then they can find themselves another pastor."*

And I hear from congregational members *"if they are not going to do what I want ... we are out of here"*

We see very few models today whose lives live out the rugged and challenging words,

James 1:2 ESV

(2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

John Piper makes the comment that he believes when *"historians list the character traits of the last third of twentieth century America, commitment, constancy, tenacity, endurance, patience, resolve and perseverance will not be on the list."*

Our list will contain a totally different set of qualities.

It will begin with an all-consuming interest in self-esteem. It will be followed by the subheadings of self-assertiveness, and self-enhancement, and self-realization.

We don't have real challenges to meet so become hypochondriacs and allow our alignments to dictate our passion and commitment.

I see people huddle in little groups giving each other reason to be weak and frail not mighty and strong.

The biggest challenge I face as a pastor is daily playing the game of how can I sugar coat what needs to be said to someone in such a way as to dodge their fears and insecurities, yet still speak to the issue.

How do I confront an error and not have people crumble under the weight of a cultural victim mentality.

I find it nearly impossible to speak to people honestly and openly because, more often than not, they have decided before the fact that my help and motives are evil and draconian.

Why would I want to hurt someone?

Why would I intentionally set out to mean and demeaning?

It makes no sense, but most people view that as the motive behind a challenge from Godly caring leadership.

People don't so much want a pastor today as a grandmother.

Someone who will feed them what they want, let them do what they want, clean up their mess for them and then tell them their special

We need help here.

When you are surrounded by a society of emotionally fragile quitters, andif you are honest with yourself, you realize how easy it is to succumb to this mentality.

In April, 1831, Charles Simeon was 71 years old. He had been the pastor of Trinity Church, Cambridge, England, for 49 years.

He was asked one afternoon by his friend, Joseph Gurney, how he had surmounted persecution and outlasted all the great prejudice against him in his 49-year ministry.

He said to Gurney,

"My dear brother, we must not mind a little suffering for Christ's sake. When I am getting through a hedge, if my head and shoulders are safely through, I can bear the pricking of my legs. Let us rejoice in the remembrance that our holy Head has surmounted all His suffering and triumphed over death. Let us follow Him patiently; we shall soon be partakers of His victory"

This is the sort of attitude that changes nations.

This is the sort of attitude that sees the church triumphant.

This is the sort of attitude that we develop when we fully realize and use this shield of faith that God has made available to us.

So let's have a look at this statement by Paul and see how it can help us.

Ephesians 6:16

16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one

In all circumstances:

16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith.

The KJV translates this ...”Above all” take up the shield of faith.

There is a popular teaching that tells us that the shield of faith is important above every other piece of the armour of God.

That this shield of faith is the weapon above all weapons to have.

And I can see how people can arrive at this conclusion if that was the correct translation of the verse, but it isn't, which is a little warning to the KJV purist.

The words used here in the Greek do not mean that this faith is the most important weapon in our armory, that is not the emphasis, it really means in *addition to* or *on top of everything else I have listed, here is some more.*

On top of truth, righteousness and peace...you need these as well.

There is a simple grouping here; the first three characteristics we should develop are truth, righteousness and peace.

Then Paul says...in addition to these you need to have faith to shield you, salvation to cover your mind, the spirit as your offensive weapon.

And so on top of the first set which are clamped, clasped, tied buckled and locked in place, immovable as it were, comes this next set which are grabbed for the immediacy of the battle.

The first three are the basics that you need, they are foundational truths 101.

A soldier puts them on and leaves them on.

This next set you will need in the heat of the battle.

Imagine a soldier in his barracks, dressed for war. The call comes; he jumps up and picks up his shield, helmet and sword.

Now imagine a baseball player.

He sits in the bunker. He has his cleats on. His uniform on and he is waiting.

When the call comes.

He steps out.

Puts on his helmet, picks up his bat and climbs into the field.

That is the imagery that Paul is using here.

The first three protect us.

This next three are the ones that make the difference between success and failure under fire.

The shield

Ephesians 6:16

16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith.

Paul tells us that we have a weapon in our arsenal that is perfectly designed to counter the attacks of the enemy.

He tells the church in Ephesus that this weapon is so effective that it is similar to the shield used by Roman warriors.

We have become accustomed to thinking of a shield as something smaller, maybe round like the Greek shields. Maybe we think of hide shields used by the Mongols.

The idea for the Roman shield originally came from the thought of a door being held in front of a person. Homer in fact used the same word for door in his writings.

The shield that Paul was probably making direct reference to was a probably the Republican Scutum shield used by Roman soldiers that was 4 foot tall and 2 foot broad.

The wooden door had changed over time.

This shield was eventually made of two planks of wood glued together and then covered with canvas and then calf skin and trimmed with metal.

Now think of this...

The average height of a Roman Warrior was 4'8" to 5'.

So a warrior could stand behind the shield and with his helmet on is all but completely covered from any frontal attack.

Now the artillery, the arrows of the enemy could be thrown from many directions and this shield was perfect to protect an entire troop.

When a roman unit was attacked by artillery, they would employ the *testudo* or tortoise formation.

The first row of men would hold their shields from about the height of their shins to their eyes, so as to cover the formation's front.

The shields would be held in such a way that they presented a shield wall to all sides.

The men in the back ranks would place their shields over their heads to protect the formation from above, balancing the shields on their helmets, overlapping them.

If necessary, the legionaries on the sides and rear of the formation could stand sideways or backwards with shields held as the front rows, so as to protect the formation's sides and rear.

This shield protected not only an individual, but also protected those that he fought with.

That is how your shield of faith is to be used.

Your faith gives not only you protection, but those that you are fight side by side with.

An enemy is always easily defeated by a troop than an individual. The attacks of the enemy are always easier to protect each other from when in a troop fights together than an individual goes to battle alone.

That is why Paul warns the early Christians not forsake the gathering of the brethren.

He encourages them to have and to maintain close relationships with those whom you can help and whom can help you in the midst of a battle.

To extinguish

Ephesians 6:16

1)6 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish

The word extinguish here means- To quench, suppress to stifle.

To stop the natural growth or direction of a fire, a desire an action or attitude.

This shield that you have says Paul, as the ability to extinguish, stifle or suppress any of the flaming darts thrown at you by the enemy to attack your faith.

Notice it does not say that it makes those arrows disappear.

Notice that it does not say that they will not be fired.

Notice that it does not say that it will not hit you, hurt you or wound you.

But it does say that your shield can suppress and stifle the impact..

When the attack does come,
Did you hear me...there is an assumption of an attack.
You WILL come under attack from the enemy of God's people.

You have a weapon that will not only full protect you but can be used to extinguish these attacks.

The arrows:

Now we come to this next statement by the Apostle Paul.

Ephesians 6:16

16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts.

He is telling us to beware of the flaming darts of the evil one.

These flaming darts were pieces of cane filled with combustible material that were shot at an army, or they were arrows wrapped in flammable material, set alight and shot at an army.

The arrows were shot at an enemy or their property. The aim was not so much to kill immediately but to have the fiery dart fasten to the warrior so that it would set them alight or set their property alight.

Arrows come quickly.

You can't see an arrow come; you have to be prepared before they come.

Arrows have a lasting damage; it was not just the immediate attack, but the effect of the burning of self and property.

Flaming arrows are not only sharp and penetrating, they are flaming.

These fiery darts are set to inflame, to ignite to burn down ones faith.

The enemy isn't just interested in wounding you, he wants you to slowly and painfully burn.

The enemies temptations can be compared to arrows because they are indiscriminate when fired at an enemy.

They are fired from afar. He wants to inflame that part of us which he wounds.

He wants to set our flesh and body alight with bitterness, unforgiveness, temptations, anger, and rage.

In the ancient battle fields there was nothing more fearsome to a warrior than the artillery of the enemy, but particularly the artillery that would burn and scar.

The shrieks, the cries, the terror that it would strike into a troop when a comrade was struck to the ground and was burning alive.

That is the the enemy wanted to do.

He wasn't just interested in killing cleanly, he wanted to strike fear into the opposing army.

That is what the evil one wants to do to the body of Christ. He wants to strike fear.

He doesn't want to just take a Christian out, he wants to take them out in such a way that all around them are traumatized and impacted by the attack.

The evil one:

Ephesians 6:16

16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one

I want you to notice that Paul does not say that we are making a stand against a general evil.
Against an evil society or an evil force.

No.

He makes it very personal.

He is talking about our battle being against an individual personality that hates God's people.

The world and much of the church does not believe in the devil and his forces.

But friend we are in a real battle against a real enemy that has a force at his command.

You need to understand this....because if you give no creditability to the doctrine of the spiritual world you will spend you life powerless and ineffective.

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

Passing bills in congress will not stem evil.
Protesting will not stem evil – we can declare a righteous standard that way, but the church is not a lobby group it is a spiritual body.

Our striving, our struggle is not merely against man and his evil and his sin.

Behind man is this power, are these devilish agencies, and are these spiritual entities.

Evil, wickedness and sin are not abstract thoughts.

Temptation is a reality.
The attacks against us are literal.

Just think about how these fiery darts manifest themselves, they are seducing temptations.

Satan fires shafts of impurity, shafts of selfishness, doubt, fear, disappointment, lust, greed, vanity, covetousness, it all comes down the three temptations that were fired at Christ in the desert-
The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

He literally bombards the believer with the arrows, the fiery darts of seductive temptation to illicit out of us ungodly, non-Christ like, evil responses.

And the only defense we have at this point, Paul says is the shield of faith. Because sometimes it just rains temptation down and we need something that will shield us and protect not only us, but those around us.

What is faith?

So we have been given this shield to protect us against these attacks and this shield is made up of this substance called faith.

So what is this thing called faith?

I believe we have lost sight of what this beautiful, simple and pure concept means.

Our definitions of what faith is have become warped and weird because of the spirit of the age and the condition of the church.

You turn on Christian Entertainment Weekly to watch your favorite faith preacher and undoubtedly they end up always talking about money. The only miracles they testify about are financial. The only prayers people seem to have answered are financial.

The impression you get from listening to preaching today is that money is the only and greatest outcome of this thing called faith.

It is like faith and finances have become like co-joined twins in the 21st century church.

Now don't hear what I am not saying, I have no problem talking about money, but money and faith are not intrinsically or biblically tied together.

Let me prove it to you.

- You want things so your Christian friends tell you need more faith.
- You can't pay the mortgage; therefore you tell your spouse they need more faith.
- You need stuff, so you buy books on faith to solve your problem instead of drawing up a budget.
- You have money and possessions, so you think God is for you and every one tells you you're a great person of faith.
- You don't have stuff, so you think God is against you because you haven't grown in your faith.

What CETV has done for us is reduce faith to a magic trick that I can conjure.

It has made faith is something that I am responsible for, something that emanates out of me.

And by the very nature of what the bible says faith is, I find these definitions not only erroneous, but also not scriptural.

Nowhere in the teachings of Christ or the teachings or of the Apostles do I find an instance where we are told to USE our faith for finances or to have faith for finances or for healing.

I found hundreds of scriptures that told me that the object of my faith, the object of my trust, the object of my worship should be God. And as a result of this loving relationship things are provided and things are cared for.

Faith is something that I have in God, not for stuff.

In the NKJV of the bible, there are 229 verses that contain the word faith two are in the Old Testament, 227 in the new.

On not one occasion am I told the focus of my faith should be finances or the miraculous.

I have found scriptures telling me that I am justified by faith, sanctified by faith, purified by faith, walking in faith, I am told that faith saved me and that people were healed because of their faith.

But nothing about having faith that is solely focused on finances, possessions healing, cars, jobs, houses, or spouses!
In fact the only verse I found that seemed to directly connect faith and finances is.

1 Timothy 6:10

“10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

This verse says if I spend too much time focusing on finances it is proof that I have strayed from my faith.

This is the conclusion that I have come to.

I can have faith in God....but I can't and don't need to have-

Faith for finances.

Faith for things.

Faith for healing.

Faith for salvation of loved ones.

Why?

Works can not lead to faith.

Faith is something that must lead to works.

So what is faith?

Faith in the Hebrew means:

Steadfastness, trust, trusting, to be established, to stand firm

The Greek word behind "faith" in the NT is pistis. As a noun, pistis is a word that was used as a term for forensic proof or evidence.

Therefore what Faith is, is the manifestation of a relationship.

Faith is trust in God based upon the evidence He has shown us and the promises He has given us.

Faith is believing that God is who he says He is and can do what he says he can do.

I don't have faith for finances.

I have faith in God's ability to give me a means to make an income.

I don't have faith for healing; I have faith in the covenant promise of God that includes healing.

Friend you can't get more trust, because trust is relational.

You cannot get more evidence because evidence is restricted, you can add to it or it would become contaminated.

Daniel 11:32

“32 “Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.”

It is my knowledge and trust in God that shields me from the attacks of the enemy.

He is the strong tower that I run to.
He is the shield that I hide under.

The more I know God, the more I can trust God.

I can trust Him in the midst of my storm.

I can trust Him to provide for my finances.

I can trust Him for my healing.

All because I have the evidence of His willingness and ability to do it in His word.

The greater my intimate knowledge and experience with God, the greater my trust in Him, the greater my shield is.

My trust in God has the ability to extinguish any attack from any devil.

My trust in God has the ability to extinguish any accusation from any foe.

My trust in God has the ability to delivery me from any temptation thrown my way.

The object of my pray life, of my reading, of my worship is not to have more stuff or a more comfortable life...but to have more God.

Matthew 6:33 ESV

(33) But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

The story of the rich young ruler wasn't about money, but the object of trust.

Would the young man sell everything and follow Christ trusting Him or would he not?

He couldn't and he wouldn't because his trust, his forensic evidence was in his stuff.

Stuff wasn't the issue.

Jesus went on to tell the apostles that-

Luke 18:29-30 ESV

(29) And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,

(30) Who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

If I believe that faith is something I must do to earn the favor of God, then I will myself working harder at getting more of this thing called faith.

- I work hard to prove I am saved, instead of accept my salvation.
- I spend my time striving for finances instead of striving for a relationship with God.
- I spend my time praying for healing instead of praying for the sick.
- I spend my time fearful of devils instead of knowing that I am fully protect and shielded from them.

You don't start with a need for something; you start with a love for someone.

So how do we develop our faith?

You have to come back next week for that.

No one gets attacked by the devil in the next 7 days.

I AM GOING TO LOOK AT THE FOUR MOST COMMON THINGS THAT LEAD TO A LACK OF FAITH.