

Ephesians
The Shield of Faith
Ephesians 6:16
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We're examining in detail the spiritual armor that God intends to protect us from the great enemy of our souls. The armor that he's talking about comes to us from Christ. And it's not literal armor, but armor that protects our minds from wrong thinking. That's because the battle between God and Satan is primarily fought in the minds of men. It's a battle of ideas. It's a battle of philosophies and ideologies and just plain, ordinary thinking that either conforms to the truth of God or the lies of Satan. Understand this - and I've made this point several times in our study and I think it's important for us to grasp - every thought, every idea, every philosophy, every concept that exists is part of that great spiritual struggle between God and Satan. For example, when you read the newspaper or you read a magazine or you watch a movie or you watch a television program or you hear the lyrics of a song or you have a conversation with a friend over lunch or over the water cooler - every single thought, every idea, ultimately comes either from God or from Satan. That is, it can be traced back to being true and therefore stemming from God and flowing from God or it can be classified as an error, or a lie and it can be traced back to Satan. There are no neutral ideas.

Psalm 1 portrays the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. And it says there's every human way, that's the way of the wicked, and then there's God's way which is the way of the Bible - Psalm 1:2. That's it. There are no neutral ideas. This same point is made by our Lord in John 8 when He says that there is Satan, who is the father of all lies, all error, all untruths, all falsehood, and then there is God, who is the author of all that is true and right. That's it.

Our sinful thoughts then, understand this, our sinful thoughts ultimately don't originate with us, but rather with the father of lies because he is the fountainhead of all error, of all lies, of all untruth. So, we need to be protected in this battle between God and Satan, this battle of ideas. We need to be protected with Christ's own armor. And that's what we're learning how to do. In Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul talks about this armor that we're to put on. And particularly in verses 14-17, he details the armor itself. And there are six different pieces that we're looking at together that, metaphorically speaking, is armor that protects our thinking from the lies of Satan and shields us with the truth of God.

Now we've looked at several of these pieces already. We've looked at three of the pieces of armor that are of the six that are detailed here. The first piece we discovered is the belt of truth in verse 14, "Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH." We said that the belt, as we sort of unfolded and unpacked this passage, the belt is a growing knowledge of biblical truth. If we're going to be protected from Satan's lies, we need a growing knowledge of biblical truth.

The second piece of armor is also in verse 14, it's the breastplate of righteousness: "HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS." We have a breastplate that shields the vital organs that support our life as it were that is made up of, that consists of, righteousness – not our own personal righteousness, but rather the righteousness that is ours through Jesus Christ or imputed righteousness. God credits the believing sinner with the righteous life of Jesus Christ. That's called justification. And we said that the breastplate we wear then is the practical application of the doctrine of justification. It is thinking about and applying the truth that in Christ, I am righteous before God. That protects me from Satan's attacks.

The third piece of armor we looked at was the shoes or sandals of the gospel. Look at verse 15, "Having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE." And we unfolded this passage last week and identified the shoes of the gospel or the sandals of the gospel this way. It is a growing confidence in the personal implications of the gospel of peace. We've come to understand that through the gospel, through the good news, we have peace with God. And as we apply that, as we think about that, as we put that on, it gives us, like the Roman soldier's cleated sandals, stability to fight against the false ideas that Satan launches at us.

So those are the first three pieces. Today we come to the fourth piece of armor that Paul identifies here in this sort of extended metaphor of how we're protected against Satan. And he says it is the shield of faith, the shield of faith. Look at verse 16, "In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." Now "in addition to all" is a good translation here. Some translations, perhaps the one that you're using, translates verse 16 "above all" as if the shield were more important than the other three pieces we've already learned about. That's not what Paul is saying here. Paul is just making a logical transition. He presents these six pieces of armor in two groups of three. The three pieces that are in the first group – the belt, the breastplate, and the sandals or shoes – are all fastened

directly onto the body. And as long as a soldier's awake and as long as he's near a potential battle, those pieces stay perpetually on him. The second three that we begin to look at today, you take up. When it's time for battle, you put them on or take them up when it's time for the battle to begin. So, the first three you put on. The second three you take up when there is an immediate threat. And so, we are to take up the shield.

Again, to fully understand the metaphor Paul is using, we have to put ourselves back in that time. The Ephesian believers reading this would have seen Roman soldiers, if not every day in their city, probably every day, but certainly on a regular basis. And so, they would have understood and had the picture immediately drawn in their minds. We don't, so we have to sort of reconstruct that a little bit. Let me explain to you the typical Roman soldier's shield. In the Roman army, there were two kinds of shields. There was a small, round shield in the shape of a circle about thirty inches in diameter usually. This was mainly used to deflect sword thrusts in close fighting. This was a shield that was used sometimes but really didn't become the main issue for the Roman soldier until the time of Constantine some 300 years after Christ.

Most of the Roman Empire's history, the primary shield that Roman soldiers used was a large, full-body shield. The Greek word that's used here by Paul is clearly the word for this second type of shield - not the small round one, but rather the large, full-body shield. In fact, the Greek word from which this word *shield* comes is the word that's used for *door* in Greek because this shield was shaped a lot like an ancient door. The Latin name was a *scutum*.

Several ancient writers describe it, including Polybius, who describes it in some detail. Let me tell you how he described it; as this historian from the Roman times describes this shield. He says that it was typically two and a half feet wide - so two and a half feet wide, some thirty inches and it was four feet in height. Now the average Roman citizen was smaller than the average Texan and so the people were smaller, so this was in essence a full-body shield - two and a half feet wide, four feet high. Its size is probably what gave birth to that famous saying by the mother of Sparta, perhaps you've heard, who told her son that he should return from battle either with his shield or on it - that is, with it in victory or on it as his funeral bier. It was a large, door-shaped shield - two and a half feet wide, four feet long.

It was made up of a frame, a wooden frame. Again, this Roman historian tells us that the frame

or carcass was made of two planks of wood glued together in a convex shape, so sort of curving out from the soldier in order to better shield him. It was about a handbreadth thick. And once the two planks of wood had been glued together in that sort of convex shape, overlaying the wood was first a piece of canvas. And then over the canvas, glued on top of the canvas and nailed to it, was leather, usually calfskin leather. Then the top edge of the shield and the bottom edge of this long, door-like shield were covered with strips of iron protected against the swinging sword that might come down upon it as well as to protect it when it was set on the ground as it always was when the soldier wasn't in the middle of the battle.

On the front of this convex, door-shaped shield, on the front of it in the center, was typically an iron medallion or metal plate; sort of an iron boss that was there, not only for decoration but to deflect stones and javelins that were thrown. One other interesting thing about the Roman shield is that usually, historians tell us, that just before the battle, the shields were soaked in water and there's a reason for that which I'll explain in a moment.

Now, why was this shield so important? What was its function? Well, understand this, although weapons have changed a great deal in the 2,000 years since Paul's time, much of the theory of warfare hasn't. Many of you in this room are old enough to remember the night America launched the first Gulf War in the early 90s. You'll remember that we all listened or watched as it began with an intense air assault. It was called "Shock and Awe". You remember that? It was only after that intense bombardment that our commanders sent in the ground troops, the bulk of the ground troops. Why is that? Well, because the air assault was intended to do several things. It was intended to produce casualties, to weaken the enemy's ranks, to weaken their resolve to fight and to disrupt their command structure. That air assault was intended to do all of those things.

Well, that same theory of combat existed during the time of the Roman Empire 2,000 years ago and honestly, even up to 3,000 years ago. But instead of stealth bombers and instead of missiles, their "Shock and Awe" was carried out by flaming arrows and spears and other projectiles. Listen to the online encyclopedia Wikipedia describe the process of battle: "Incendiary arrows [that is, arrows that are set on fire] were used throughout the ancient periods. The simplest flaming arrows had oil or resin-soaked material tied just below the arrowhead and were effective against wooden structures. Both the Assyrians and the Judeans used fire arrows at the siege of Lachish in

701 B.C. [700 years before Christ they were using this method]. More sophisticated devices [Wikipedia goes on to say] were developed by the Romans which had iron boxes and tubes which were filled with incendiary substances and attached to arrows or spears. And these arrows could be launched either by hand, one at a time, or by a throwing machine that the Romans had designed, essentially a sort of machine gun of burning arrows or javelins.”

Now it’s impossible for us to fully appreciate the terror that this would produce on an army of that time, on an opposing army. Imagine yourself for a moment now on the battlefield opposite one of those armies of the ancient world. You’re there standing next to your fellow soldiers. You’re beginning slowly to march ahead. You see the enemy up ahead. You know what it’s like. You’re trained in taking them on by hand. But all of a sudden, breaking the silence of that morning, comes an absolute onslaught, a barrage that darkens the sky of flaming arrows, arrows set aflame, in some cases javelins, set aflame, hurling through the air thrown by a sort of ancient machine gun, hundreds coming down and showering upon you and your ranks. The shield then was to protect the soldier’s entire body from all of the flying missiles that were launched on an opposing army on the battlefield.

Paul uses the image of a Roman soldier’s shield to make a crucial spiritual lesson for us. Let’s look at our spiritual shield. Now that we understand what the Roman soldier’s shield was like and how it was used; let’s look at how he uses that analogy here in our spiritual shield. Verse 16, “In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith.” Now, this verse is going to explain to us several important concepts about our shield.

First, I want you to see the nature of our shield. It is the shield of faith or the shield which is faith. That Roman soldier had a shield that was made of a couple of pieces of wood glued together with canvas covering it and then leather covering it and then iron on the top and the bottom and the front with armholes for him to hold it. And that shielded him on the battlefield, his full body, from the onslaught of those flying missiles. Our shield is not that. Our shield is faith. What protects us from all of those flying, flaming missiles on the battlefield in the war between God and Satan is faith.

Now Paul has already explained the importance of faith in this letter – *saving faith*. Look back at Ephesians 1:13, he says, “In Him [Christ] you also, after listening to the message of the truth, the

gospel of your salvation - having also believed [there's the verb form of faith], you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." He says salvation came to you through the channel of faith. In verse 15, he makes reference to the same thing. But over in chapter 2, verse 8, he makes it crystal clear; a very familiar passage: "For by grace you have been [spiritually rescued or] saved through faith." The channel through which you received your spiritual rescue was faith. And that salvation including faith did not have its source in you. It was not out of yourselves; instead, it was the gift of God. And so, faith was instrumental in our salvation. Faith was the channel through which we received salvation. Or to use a different illustration, faith was the cup in which we received the gift of salvation, the drink of living water in Christ.

Now in chapter 6, now that we're in Christ, faith becomes not only the means for our salvation as we saw earlier, but it becomes our spiritual shield. Now let me make a very important point here. Do not be confused by what Paul is saying about the shield which is faith. He is not saying that our faith protects us from Satan. It's not our faith, it's whom our faith is in. You see, many Christians misunderstand what faith is and the place of faith. Understand this, faith is not some power that resides in me. Instead, it is a simple response to God and to His Word. Faith is not what protects me from Satan any more than it is faith that saves me. Faith is merely the means or the channel through which I'm saved, and faith is merely the means or channel through which I am protected. The key is the object. It is never faith that accomplishes anything. It is the object of our faith. And what's the object of saving faith? What is the object of faith that brings spiritual rescue? It's Christ and His work. The only legitimate object of the faith that brings spiritual rescue to the sinner is Jesus Christ - His perfect life, His substitutionary death, and His resurrection. That's it. The only hope you have, if you're here this morning and you're not in Christ, the only hope you have of being right with God, of not enduring His wrath forever as Jesus taught, is to place your sole trust and confidence in Jesus Christ, in His perfect life, in His substitutionary death and in the reality of His resurrection. That's your only hope. That's the object of saving faith.

So, what's the object of sanctifying faith, the faith that takes us once we're Christians and moves us toward spiritual growth and holiness? The object of sanctifying faith is the person of God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and His Word. Now understand this, faith then is simply a believer laying hold of God's resources. John Calvin put it like this: "Faith is nothing and can do nothing

without the Word.” Faith then, the object of sanctifying faith, the object of saving faith, is Christ as revealed in the Word. The object of sanctifying faith is what God says about Himself and us in His Word. That’s the shield.

Now God is often referred to as our shield in the Old Testament. Here we’re told faith is our shield. How does that connect? How does that relate? Let me show you. Go back to, well, I’m not going to take you there, but you remember in Genesis 15:1, God tells Abraham He’s his shield. But this particular image becomes even more obvious in the Psalms. Look at Psalm 18:30. And by the way, I want you to notice as I go through a couple of these verses in the Psalms how connected the concept of shield and God and His Word, how those three things are often connected. Psalm 18:30, “As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the Lord is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.” Again, notice that God becomes a shield to us through the word which He has spoken to us.

Let’s look at another one. Look at Psalm 115 and I actually have more than a dozen, but I’m only going to show you, in my notes here, but I’m only going to show you a couple. Look at Psalm 115 and you’ll see this same concept. Psalm 115:9, “O Israel, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield.” The nation is called to trust in God because He’s the shield of the nation. The priests, verse 10, are called to trust in the Lord because He’s their shield. Verse 11, all those who fear the Lord are to put their trust in the Lord for He is their shield, their protection. Here we’re just told God is our shield. But look over the next psalm, Psalm 119:114, and you see it connecting to His Word again: “You are my hiding place and my shield; I wait for [I hope for] Your word.” God, You shield me in the sense that what You’ve said about Yourself, what You’ve said You will do, is my shield.

One other passage, look at Proverbs 30:5, and again you see this interconnection: “Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.” God is our shield in the sense that His Word is our shield.

Now, do you see how these descriptions in the Old Testament connect with what Paul is saying in Ephesians 6? They absolutely are in perfect agreement because faith is a simple confidence in God’s Word about Himself and God’s Word of what He has promised. So, you see how it all connects. That’s our shield.

So, let me put it all together and define this shield for you as I have with the other pieces of armor. When we talk about the shield of faith, we mean this - the shield of faith is an unwavering trust in God and in His Word, an unwavering trust in God and in His Word. It is hearing what God has said and applying it to ourselves at the moment of the battle. Lloyd-Jones puts it like this: "I define the shield of faith as meaning the quick application of what we believe [that is, the truth of God] as an answer to everything the devil hurls at us." A quick application, that is a quick understanding of, application of, confidence in, what God has said about Himself. And that protects us; what He has promised to do becomes our protection.

And this trust is not something self-generated. You can't just wake up one morning and say, "Okay, I'm going to have this kind of trust in God." It's a gift of God just like saving faith is a gift of God. You remember Ephesians 2:8: "It is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Saving faith is a gift from God. If you're sitting here this morning and you are in Christ, it is not because you are just smarter than all the other people on earth. It's not because you heard the gospel and you had the good sense to say, "That makes sense. I'm going to believe that." No, you were blind, the Bible says, "spiritually blind." You were dead. So, how is it that you came to believe? Because God gave you faith to believe.

Listen to other texts. Acts 13:48, "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." Acts 16:14 of Lydia, the first European convert: "The Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." Why did she respond to the things spoken by Paul? Because she was smarter than everybody else. No, because the Lord opened her heart. Acts 18:27, "Those who had believed through grace." Through God's unmerited favor to them. That's why they believe. Or I love Philippians 1:29, Paul says, "To you it has been granted . . . to believe." Oh, and by the way, he goes on to say, "and to suffer". It's been granted.

So, faith, saving faith, is a gift. Faith, sanctifying faith, is a gift. It can be, however, strengthened and we'll talk about that in a moment. But faith then is the shield. That is the nature of the shield we've been given. Faith not only saves, but it's crucial to our spiritual growth and our sanctification and here, it's crucial to our spiritual protection against Satan's attacks. So, the nature of our shield is faith, an unwavering trust in God and His Word. That's what we raise to protect us from the flaming arrows that come showering down upon us from the evil one.

Now I want you to notice not only the nature of our shield, which is faith but notice secondly the effectiveness of our shield. Look at verse 16, the effectiveness of our shield: “In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” Now before we look at that, what are flaming arrows? Well, I agree with Peter O’Brien, a wonderful commentator on this book of Ephesians, who writes: “Here the burning arrows depict every kind of attack launched by the devil and his hosts against the people of God.” Flaming arrows is just a generic description of everything Satan launches at us. It includes every kind of internal temptation - temptations to ungodly behavior, to doubt, to despair. It also includes external assaults like persecution and false teaching. It’s every single missile Satan shoots at us that is in line with his schemes or his tactics back up earlier in this paragraph.

Now notice what God says through Paul, the promise He makes in verse 16, “you.” And the pronoun “you” isn’t in the Greek text; it’s contained in the verb which is typical of a case-based language. And it’s plural. It includes everybody. So, Paul is saying to all the believers in Ephesus, he’s saying to all of us, all of you: “You [every believer] will be able to extinguish.” Every Christian will have the ability - that’s what he’s saying - to extinguish Satan’s flaming arrows. And notice not just some of them, but “All of the flaming arrows of the evil one.” That is a huge statement. Paul is saying that an unwavering trust in God and His Word will give every single Christian the ability to extinguish every single attack.

Now, why is that true? How can he make such a far-reaching comment? Well, think about it the other way for a moment. I want you to think for a moment about, not very long, but I want you to think about some sins that you can for sure remember that you committed this week. Maybe they were words that you shouldn’t have said. Maybe they were attitudes and thoughts you shouldn’t have housed. Maybe it was a behavior that you knew was sinful and wrong, maybe a habit in which you indulged. I want you to think about that sin for just a moment and I want you to think about this. Every time we sin, every time you chose to sin this week, every time I chose to sin this week, every time we give in to temptation, we have lost our trust in either what God has said about Himself or what He has said in His Word – always. So, the shield of faith then, an unwavering trust in God and His Word, is completely one hundred percent effective against all of Satan’s attacks when we use it.

You say, “Wow! So how do I use it?” Let’s deal briefly with the application. What do you do with this? What Paul wants us to see here is that all around us and within our minds, there is a silent, invisible war going on, a war between God and Satan waged by demons against us. And it’s not your soul that’s at stake if you’re a Christian, but it is your spiritual health, your growth, your effectiveness. And the enemy you’re fighting doesn’t come at you with guns and bayonets and tanks and airplanes. He attacks you with ideas and thoughts. How can we protect ourselves from Satan’s lies that are all around us? They fill the air around us, the airwaves, everything we read, every idea, or many of the ideas that are shared by the people around us. How do we protect ourselves against them?

Well, let me show you how this works in some very specific circumstances. Let me ask you what are Satan’s primary tactics? We studied this now some time back. What are his primary tactics? We said, as we looked through the Scripture, there are primarily three. Satan attacks the Word – that is, he gets us to question its authenticity, its sufficiency, to doubt it, to question it in some way or simply not to obey it, not to do it, to disregard it in some way, to ignore it. He attacks the Word. Secondly, we said he intimidates through fear and persecution. And thirdly, we said he seduces us through temptation. Now those are his three primary tactics. So how does an unwavering trust in God and His Word defend us against those attacks?

Let me show you. Let’s start with the first one – attacks on the Word of God. Go back to Psalm. I want to show you this in the book of Psalms. And turn to the psalm we already looked at a moment ago – Psalm 115. And I want to show you something in its context here. Psalm 115. Now I wish I had time to go through this carefully, verse by verse, but I just want you to see the sweep of the first few verses. He’s talking about idolatry: “The nations [verse 2] say, ‘Where, now, is their God?’” Why did they say that? Well, they said that not only because at times it appeared like Israel’s God wasn’t helping them out very much because He was letting them be taken captive; but in the ancient world, you had idols. You had visible gods that could be seen and touched – images. Israel didn’t have an image. Israel didn’t have anything that depicted their God. There was nothing but air in the temple. That Ark of the Covenant was like God’s throne, but God was nowhere to be seen. Where is your God? So, they made idols instead and he goes on to describe all the idols. And they trust in them, verse 8. How do you respond? How do you respond when Satan through, in this case, false religion attacks the truth? You respond by trusting

in God. Look at verse 9, “O Israel, trust in the Lord [Yahweh].” He is our shield. Trust what He said. Trust what He’s revealed to us in His Word. Same thing with the priests in verse 10 - with all those who fear the Lord, trust in Him. This is how you respond when you find your faith attacked, when you find the Word of God attacked, you respond with faith, with trust.

Look over a couple of pages at Psalm 119. Here the psalmist is being ridiculed for believing God’s Word. You ever experienced that? You ever sit in a class and heard some professor ridicule what you believe or maybe ridicule you personally, insult you in the response on your paper because he takes issue with your faith? Maybe a coworker or boss? Certainly, we hear it all the time in the news. How do you respond to that? You respond with the shield of faith. You respond by putting your full, unwavering confidence in what God has said about Himself and the world. Look at Psalm 119:21:

You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, who wander from Your commandments.
[Here are arrogant people who have nothing to do with God and His Word, but instead sort of speak down to those who do. Ever experience that?] Take away the reproach and contempt from me, for I observe Your testimonies. Even though princes [the leaders of the country] sit and talk against me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes. Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors.

I never lose my confidence, the psalmist says, in Your truth, in Your Word. When Satan attacks Your Word, I sink my trust deeper into what You have revealed. Go over in verse 49:

In which You have made me hope [I have made Your Word my hope]. This is my comfort in my affliction . . . [Now why is he afflicted? Verse 51.] The arrogant utterly deride me, yet I do not turn aside from Your law. [They mock me for what I believe. They mock me for believing Your Word and Your truth, but I just sink my trust deeper. I do not turn aside from Your law.] I have remembered Your ordinances from of old, O Lord, and comfort myself.

This is the shield of faith. You have an unwavering trust in God and His Word, even when that Word is being attacked by false religion or by those who ridicule you for accepting its truth.

What about when Satan tries to intimidate us with fear and persecution? How do you

respond then? Well, let me show you a New Testament text. I have a couple in Psalm, but I'm running out of time. So, look at 1 Peter 5. Peter says when you're facing persecution, put up the shield of faith. Trust in who God is and what He's revealed; 1 Peter 5:8:

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion [here bringing persecution], seeking someone to devour. [How do you respond?] Resist him, firm in your faith [don't be moved, have an unwavering confidence in God first of all], knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. [And knowing that] After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you [and He's going to be the king forever].

So put your trust back in who He is when you face that persecution. Or it's like Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 10 when He said listen, when persecution comes, don't fear those who can kill the body and that's all they can do. They've taken their best shot. The worst thing they can do is kill you. You better fear the One who can cast both body and soul into hell, Jesus said. So don't let it affect you. Sink your trust back in what God said.

One other way Satan attacks us is through temptation. How does trusting in God and His Word help us in temptation? Well, you remember the most famous verse in Psalm 119:11: "Your Word I have treasured in my heart [that is, I have known it and I have put my trust, my confidence in it], that I may not sin against You." Your Word and trust in Your Word protect me from giving in to temptation, from giving in to sin.

Look at 1 John since you're over in the New Testament there. Look at 1 John chapter 5. What about this system, this world system that Satan has constructed - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life that's all around us? People are consumed with living for the bodily appetites, for the accumulation of stuff, and for personal glory. How do you overcome all of that? How do you live above that? First John 5:4, "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world [this world system]; and this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith." Faith enables us. Our trust in God and what He's revealed enables us to overcome the system which surrounds us, in which tempts us.

Very practically, let me just give one example. We live in a system, a world system, that 1 John 2 says is given over to the lust of the flesh, for the craving to satisfy the body. And especially in our culture, that involves sexual sin. What do you do when Satan brings some external bait that attracts your own evil heart? How do you respond when you're under attack? You raise the shield of faith. You remind yourself, as James says, that that's not a good gift. Every good gift comes [where?] down from the Father of Lights. It's Satan's lie that that's going to satisfy you, that that's going to bring some satisfaction. You remind yourself of what God has said. He's not withholding something good from you. He's protecting you from what will harm you and destroy your soul. Remind yourself that God is good, that He's wise, that He's faithful not to allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, and that He has power. As we pray in the Lord's Prayer, do not lead us into a situation which will cause us to sin, but rather deliver us from the evil one. God has the power to do that. Remind yourself. This is holding up the shield of faith in the middle of the battle.

This protects us, but it also protects those around us. You know, the Roman army, each Roman soldier had a shield that he held up when those arrows came raining in to protect himself. But the Romans had a system whereby they interlocked those shields so that my shield not only protected me, but if an arrow was coming from a difficult direction, it couldn't go between my shield and my neighbor's, but it helped protect him as well. Here's how it works. As I see you manifesting faith in the midst of the battle, trusting God and His Word when you find yourself in the middle of a trial or a temptation, it helps strengthen me and vice versa. Faith is our shield.

You say maybe my shield is faith, but it's a little thin. Well, listen. Faith, and here's the good news, faith is not a light switch that can be turned on or off. Faith is a muscle that can either be weak or grow strong. Read Romans 4 where it talks about Abraham who didn't grow weak in faith, but rather grew strong in faith [how?] because he considered God. That's what it says. Read that passage - Romans 4:18 and following. He considered God. You know how you can grow your faith strong? Come to discover what God has said about Himself and the promises He's made. And the more you learn about Him, the stronger your faith will grow.

One of my favorite verses in all of scripture is Psalm 9:10. Think about it. Meditate on it. It's a constant source of companionship to me. Psalm 9:10, "Those who know Your name [that is,

those who understand what You're really like, God] will put their trust in You." When you really come to understand who God is, you can't help but trust Him. Why? Because He's worthy of trust. That will strengthen your faith.

So, take up the shield of faith. Whenever you're under attack, when the Word of God is being attacked by false religion or error, when you find yourself being persecuted, insulted, ridiculed, your faith being maligned, when you find yourself in temptation, when the arrows that are set ablaze come raining down on your life, hold up the shield of faith - an unwavering confidence in what God has revealed about Himself and what He's going to do. And it will, Paul says, protect you. It will, you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your Word and Your truth. Thank You, O God, for what Paul has written here, for the powerful images that it conjures up, for the metaphor that expresses so richly and so beautifully what our spiritual protection is.

Lord, thank You that the power doesn't reside in me, but that the faith You gave us to believe, the faith You give us to continue to believe in You as we continue the process of sanctification, that faith merely looks at You and who You are and what You have revealed and simply clings to that.

Father, help us to see that every time we're tempted, we're being tempted ultimately to question something about You - Your goodness, Your power, Your wisdom and to question Your Word.

Father, help us in response to that temptation to raise the shield of faith and to stand with unwavering trust in who You are and in what You've said. Lord, remind us that those who know Your name, those who truly understand Your character, will put their trust in You because You, O Lord, have never forsaken those who fear You. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.