

The Shield of Faith
Series: The Armor of God
Ephesians 6:13,16
February 13, 2022

Welcome again to worship and thank you to all the Scouts and their families for being part of Scout Sunday.

Today, we are continuing our message series “The Armor of God.” The New Testament Apostle Paul was languishing in a prison, guarded by a Roman soldier. So, when he wrote to his friends in the city of Ephesus, he used the image of a Roman soldier to convey how the Christian must be equipped to fight Satan, the evil one, in these evil and terrible days.

So far, we have talked about the belt of truth and how it isn’t just holding up your pants. We need to know what is the truth when the world goes crazy around us, as we are seeing in these days.

Then we talked about the breastplate of righteousness, that armor that protects our vital organs, and that is the righteousness of God.

Last week, I talked about the shoes that bring the Gospel of peace, that the believer will go with a message of peace in a world full of hatred.

Let’s look at today’s passage, so turn to page 5 in your bulletin, or if you are worshiping online, grab your spiritual notebook and your Bible and turn to Ephesians 6, verse 13 and 16.

Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm... In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.¹

Today’s armor is the shield of faith.

Since the movie “Star Wars” came out, we don’t think about warriors holding shields. Your lightsaber can block laser shots and other attacks. But when I was a kid and I played sword-fighting with my brother, we had shields. Our swords were usually a broom handle or a thin, yellow, wiffleball batt, and our shields were trash can lids. The handle was in a perfect place to hold it to block your brother’s attack with his pretend sword. Of course, I always aimed at his shield, not his body.

But through the centuries, soldiers have carried shields. But the shield of a Roman soldier wasn’t a small, round thing. It was a big oblong shield that could protect the entire body, for it is moveable and could be directed at any attack no matter where it came from.

Paul said that the Christian’s shield is faith. Now, he didn’t say “the” faith, as in a religion, but simply faith.

With Paul, faith is always complete trust in Christ.

When you are in a spiritual battle, trust completely in Christ. When you face the frailties of the body, trust completely in Christ. When your future is uncertain, trust completely in Christ.

The writer of Hebrews said in Hebrews 11:1:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.²

¹ Ephesians 6:13, 16 (NLT2)

² Hebrews 11:1 (NRSV)

I read a story about a young man who was an incredible pianist. According to his professor, he had abilities that left his peers far behind. To the casual listener, his mastery of the piano is both enjoyable and amazing, and to the informed listener, his mastery was nothing short of incredible. The thing is that the man had limited hearing. He was able to hear and enjoy the notes in the lower register of the piano, but as the notes got higher, they became dimmer to his ear. There were sections of the keyboard which he never heard. Had this young pianist simply chosen to play those pieces which he could fully appreciate, he would still be outstanding. Yet this pianist chose to play notes that he will never hear.

That is faith. And the Christian needs that kind of faith to protect them from what Paul calls the fiery darts or arrows of the devil.

One of the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart. It was a dart tipped with a rag, then dipped in pitch. The pitch-soaked rag was set a fire and the dart was thrown. Later on, arrows were tipped the same way and shot at the enemy.

Why were these fiery darts or arrows so effective? It would catch things on fire. If the shield was not made properly, the dart would catch the shield on fire. Eventually, the soldier would have to drop the shield, and thus become unprotected. But with a good shield, the dart would sink enough into the wood so that the flame was put out.

What are the fiery darts and arrows of the devil? What does he fling at us?

First, he fires at us evil thoughts.

The devil tries to place in our minds evil thoughts.

Did you see the video of the ambush on police this week? And what did the guy use? A baby. It is a very sick individual to use a baby to try to kill police.

Throughout history, the devil has been placing evil thoughts in the minds of people to do all sorts of malicious and terrible things. The Holocaust is the most recent and egregious one, but there have been massacres throughout history. Look at the news today. What reason does Russia have to invade Ukraine, especially during the Olympics, when nations are to come together in peace and friendly games. That's crazy, but that's the kind of evil thoughts the devil puts into our minds.

Faith protects the believer from allowing these kinds of thoughts to take root into our minds. Instead of hatred, we think love. Instead of prejudice, we think equality. Instead of malice, we think charity.

The believer who walks so as to feel the witness of God's Spirit within them is protected. Though evil thoughts pass through the mind, they never stay.

Faith - complete trust in Christ – protects us from acting on the evil thoughts of the devil.

Second, the devil fires fiery darts of temptation at us.

The devil himself is wicked and he endeavors to make us wicked. So, he shoots darts of temptation at us, to try to get us to become wicked. Temptations which light the soul on fire for possessions, power, sex, fame. That's what the devil tried to do against Jesus: tempted Him to sin against God and go a different path.

The devil is always trying to tempt us to disobey God, but when we walk close with Christ, we are safe from temptation. Faith, acted upon the word of God and applying that, acted upon the grace of Christ and improving that, quenches the darts of temptation.

Faith – complete trust in Christ – helps us deflect the fiery darts of temptation. We do not succumb because of faith.

Finally, the devil fires fiery darts of accusations.

When evil thoughts don't work, when temptations fail to penetrate, then the devil makes accusations against us. He is really good at these lies:

- You have done too many sinful things for God to be able to forgive you.
- You are worthless.
- No one could love you.
- You are pitiful.

Have you ever heard these kinds of accusations? Sure you have. The devil has these and a million more.

But folks, they are all lies. Hear these words from Romans 8:

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.³

There is nothing the devil can say to you that supersedes these words: nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God.

Faith – complete trust in Christ – is the shield with which we must quench these fiery darts, wherein we should receive them, and so render them ineffectual, that they may not hit us, or at least that they may not hurt us.

Faith defeats the enemy.

Faith is part of everyday living. When you are ill, you go to a doctor whose name you can't pronounce. He or she gives you a prescription you cannot read. You take it to a pharmacist you have never seen. The pharmacist gives you medication you do not understand. And yet, you take it. Now, that is living by Faith!

Maybe, it's time for you to have faith in the Healer who created you, Who gives you a simple prescription for life: trust in Christ. All you have to do is take it. Receive Him by faith, and the devil can't touch you.

³ Romans 8:38-39 (NLT2)