

WELCOME - Turn to Ephesians 6, we'll start in verse 10.

- PRAY

We're continuing our series through the book of Ephesians.

- Specifically looking at the reality of spiritual warfare.
- There is a spiritual battle afoot...and every Christian has been called into the ranks of God's army.
- The good news: we are not defenseless or weaponless in this holy battle! (We are not pawns on a cosmic chessboard)
- Through the Cross, God has granted every Christian POWERFUL ARMOR to STAND firmly in this battle and RESIST our spiritual enemy.

So far, we've learned about three pieces of this armor:

- The Belt of Truth
 - Which protects us from lies AND supports the rest of the armor.
- The Breastplate of Righteousness
 - Which protects the most vital aspects of our identity from the effects of sin and shame.
- The Shoes of Peace
 - Which provide us with protection, stability and solid footing as we stand against the "wiles" of the devil.

There are a few important aspects of the armor of God that are essential for us to understand.

The armor is God's armor.

- **2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-4**
³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds...
- This means that because we are in a *spiritual* battle, we have been GIVEN powerful *spiritual* weapons for fight.
- IMP: We did not create this armor, it has been purchased FOR US and given TO US by God, in order that we might be protected.
- Like any soldier, we have been given STEWARDSHIP over it, but it's not ours.
- It's ROYAL armor.
- I would much rather have God's well-crafted royal armor than my own cheap peasant armor.
- Every medieval war battle scene...
 - Poor peasants in the front with their...they're gonna die.
 - But the knights...they've got the royal armor.

The armor points us to, and is fulfilled in Jesus.

- Each piece of the armor has been forged in the finished work of the Cross.
- Every ounce of its strength and power comes from the blood of calvary.
- As we adorn Christ, as we put on Christ (Rom 13:14) so we are outfitted with HIS armor.

The armor is metaphorical, not magical.

- This spiritual armor is not conjured up. It's not a hack to achieving victory in life. It's not a cheat code.
- Each piece of armor represents a powerful spiritual reality in the life of the Christian...
- Which means...

The armor must be appropriated to be effective.

- These spiritual realities must be APPLIED to our lives. The armor MUST be PUT ON.
- Some people need to hear that today. I need to hear that.
- Many of us have GREAT spiritual armor, but it's sitting on a shelf...
- We're like: "Doesn't that look beautiful up there"
- But when satan comes knocking, that armor does NOTHING if its not YOU.
- The armor of God must be appropriated IN our lives for it to provide any spiritual protection FOR our lives.

Ephesians 6 is really all about how we prepare a ready defense against the attack of the enemy, using the armor that God has given to us.

Today we're going look at another piece of equipment in our spiritual arsenal: The Shield of Faith.

- Starting in verse 10

EPHESIANS 6:10-16 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the [b]wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of [c]the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ **above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.**

This past Sunday night my friend and I were out in Ventura harbor diving for lobster...

- We usually kayak out to the outer break wall of the harbor...where the lobster live.
- We were on our way back in (about 20 feet from the shore), when a sudden wave capsized our kayak...our gear spilled out
- Which would have been no big deal...except...
- One of those items was my \$300 dive light (which was not turned on).
- Finding any small, non-floating object in the murky ocean is highly improbable.
- But finding it at night? IMPOSSIBLE.
- I'm like "it's gone. My \$300 investment has just been gobbled up by the sea."
- But my friend was adamant, "no...it's out here...and we're gonna find it."
- So we started to scour the sandy ocean floor for any trace of my light.
- With each wave that rolled in, I began to feel more and more defeated...
- But my friend persisted.
- He started talking to the light..."come on, where are you?"..."I know you're here...we're going to find you."
- Even though I was ready to give up, I marveled at his confidence.
- After about 20 minutes of searching in the cold water, it was not looking good...we were ready to throw in the towel...
- And then I stepped on something...I reached down into the water...it was the light!
- I held it up to the sky and let out a massive roar of relief, and we both rejoiced together.

Even against improbable (maybe impossible) odds, my friend had FAITH that we would find my expensive light.

- He had unwavering, unflinching, even illogical confidence that we were not going to leave the ocean empty handed...even when I didn't.
- If our actions had been determined by MY faith (or lack of it), I would be out 300 bucks.
- But because of HIS FAITH, because he was SO CONFIDENT, I stood out in the ocean long enough to step on my stupid light.

Faith is a very powerful thing. And it is uniquely human.

- We are the only creatures on earth who can have faith in anything.
- Your dog can't have faith. Your cat. Your pet goldfish can't have faith.
- Only human beings can have faith.
- Faith is hardwired into our spiritual DNA. We were created to be creatures of faith. You and I were made to believe in something.
- Faith is what allows human beings to achieve the unachievable.
- Faith is what put Neil Armstrong's feet on the surface of the moon.

- ▶ Faith is what allows Olympians and athletes to overcome what look like insurmountable odds.
- ▶ Faith is at the heart of every underdog story you've ever heard or seen.
 - ▶ Without faith Cinderella never makes it to the ball.
 - ▶ Without faith Sam and Frodo never get to Mount Doom to destroy the ring.
 - ▶ Without faith Luke never becomes a Jedi and the empire is never destroyed.
- ▶ Faith is a critical piece of our human story.

It's important here that we draw a distinction between faith and Christian faith.

- ▶ Anyone can have faith in anything.
 - ▶ The Stock Market...
 - ▶ Your political party of choice...
 - ▶ That your favorite sports team will win the league championship.
 - ▶ The supporters of every English soccer club has a chant about how their team is the GREATEST team the world has ever seen...even if they are TERRIBLE!
 - ▶ No matter how bad their team is, they show up and they chant.
 - ▶ That *is* technically faith!

But the problem with these kinds of faith is that they are centered around outcomes...

- ▶ You have faith in the stock market or the economy because of the outcome it could have on your bank account.
- ▶ You have faith in a president or a political party because of the outcome it could have on your livelihood.
- ▶ You have faith in a sports team winning a championship because of the outcome it could have on your emotional state.

What makes the Christian faith so much DIFFERENT is that the Christian faith is centered around a person, not an outcome.

- ▶ Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone is the object of the Christian faith.
- ▶ Jesus is the object of our confidence and our trust.
- ▶ **HEBREWS 11:1**
Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.
- ▶ In the next chapter it says that Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith.
- ▶ Meaning that Jesus gave it to us, He is working it out in us...therefore, Jesus is at the center of it. He is the center of our confidence and our trust.
- ▶ And although lesser faiths might be able to get us through little parts of this life, it is only faith in Jesus that can take us beyond this life.
- ▶ No other faith can outlast the grave...

- Your mutual fund won't do it. Your political activism won't do it. Certainly your sports team won't do it.
- Jesus is the only one who can do it, because Jesus is the only one who did it.

True Christian faith is centered around, fixed on, and directed toward the *person* of Jesus.

- The PERSON of Jesus.
- We have to Make that distinction, because we can so easily treat our Christian faith in the same way that we treat every other kind of faith...based on the OUTCOME that WE DESIRE.
- Based on what Jesus can DO FOR US. This is a slippery slope.
 - We have faith that Jesus will bring the financial breakthrough.
 - We have confidence that Jesus is going to bring the healing.
 - We trust that Jesus is going to bring us children, or a spouse.
- Nothing inherently wrong about these desires. Who wouldn't want these things?
- But these things can't be the object of our faith.
 - Because sometimes we lose our savings.
 - Sometimes we don't get better.
 - Sometimes we can't have children.
 - Sometimes marriage isn't in the cards for us.
- We need a faith that TRANSCENDS these realities. We need a faith that TRANSCENDS outcomes.
- And we find it in the PERSON of Jesus, placing our trust and confidence in the fact that he is GOOD, he is LOVE, he is SOVEREIGN, and He NEVER CHANGES.

This is the kind of faith that Paul is talking about when he describes the "Shield of Faith".

- I love that we have this artwork, because it really helps us connect with Paul's audience.
- Any Ephesian citizen would have been accustomed to the sight of this shield as Roman soldiers patrolled the streets...
- This shield (also known as a *Scutum*) was 4 feet tall and about 2.5 feet wide.
- It was rectangular, with a rounded, convex shape and it weighed about 22lbs.
- This shield was widely praised for its effectiveness in battle.
- Perhaps its greatest advantage was its size.
 - The scutum was almost double the size of the round shields that the Greek armies used in combat.
 - In fact, the Roman shield was known as the "door-shield" (almost as big as a door)
- When standing, the shield covered nearly all of the soldiers' midsection, providing an extra line of protection for their vital organs.

- And when crouched, a soldier could completely hide himself behind the shield.
- When describing a battle, the Greek historian Polybius noted that "The Scutum gave [soliders] both protection and confidence, which they owed to the size of the shield."

Although the Roman shield provided many advantages to the soldier, it did have a few disadvantages.

- Namely it's construction.
- Smaller shields were typically fashioned from copper or some other kind of strong metal
- But in order to offset the size to weight ratio, the large scutum was constructed from layers of wood
- This left the shield particularly vulnerable to fire.
- One of the primary military tactics adopted against the Roman troops was to take arrows, wrap them with a fibrous material, dip them in a flammable substance like pitch or tar, and then volley them at the Roman infantry in an attempt to break up the battalion and neutralize their defenses.
- It's not hard to imagine the kind of chaotic effect that a burning shield would have on an army squadron.

We need to remember that each piece of the armor protects us from a specific tactic of the enemy.

Paul is using this imagery of fiery darts (sometimes referred to as "flaming missiles" or "flaming arrows"), to expose the tactics of our spiritual enemy.

- In the same way that the enemies of Rome fired flaming arrows at the heart of the infantry, so too does Satan fire flaming arrows at the heart of the Christian.

These arrows typically take the form of thoughts (or feelings), and have three objectives:

- 1. To cause doubt**
- 2. To bring discouragement**
- 3. To create distraction**

First, satan will attempt to fire thoughts and ideas that cause us to doubt the promises and the character of God.

- He has been doing this as long as the earth has existed. And he is really good at it.
- He is really good at getting us to doubt God, His word, His intentions, and His character.
- Look at how he does this in Genesis 3:
- **GENESIS 3:1-6 (NIV)**

- ▶ ¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"
² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.
- ▶ What transpired that day in the garden was an assault on Eve's faith.
- ▶ Satan was attacking Eve's trust and confidence in God's word and His character.
- ▶ How did he do it? With a little fiery dart of doubt.
- ▶ "Did God really say?...Is that really what He meant?"
 - ▶ Did God really say not to eat that?
 - ▶ Did God really say that you can't look at that? Surely He's not talking about instagram...
 - ▶ It's just a little gossip...surely it isn't SLANDER.
 - ▶ I get a little annoyed sometimes, but surely it isn't BITTERNESS.
- ▶ Soon enough, like eve we are partnering with the devil and we don't even realize it, all because of a little doubt sown by the enemy.
- ▶ If Satan can cause us to doubt God even just a LITTLE, then he can easily manipulate our actions.

Or, if the enemy can't make you doubtful about God...then he will try to make you discouraged. Specifically about yourself.

- ▶ Sometimes he does try to bring discouragement externally (financial hardship, relational discord, global pandemics)
- ▶ But more often than not Satan attempts to discourage us INTERNALLY.
- ▶ And he does that by firing on our identity...
- ▶ [Matthew 3: Jesus is baptized..."This is my beloved Son"](#)
- ▶ [Jesus is led into the desert...fasts for 40 days and nights...confronted by Satan.](#)
- ▶ Remember HOW he confronts Jesus...he says: "If you really are the Son of God...turn these stones into bread. If you really are the Son of God...throw yourself off this tower..." (Satan loves if/then statements)
- ▶ If you really are a child of God, then do this...
- ▶ If you really are a child of God, do more...
- ▶ If you really are a child of God, try harder...
- ▶ If you really are a child of God, then you need to PERFORM BETTER...

- And what is especially cruel is that the moment that we fail to perform (which is inevitable), satan always is right there to bring accusation. He flips the equation on us.
- Because you didn't perform, then you must not be a child of God.
- Because you gave into temptation, then you must not actually be a beloved son (daughter) of God.
- And all of a sudden our very identity as a child of God starts to unravel before our very eyes as we descend into a discouraging cycle of performance and accusation.

Or, if the enemy can't get you to doubt God...if he can't discourage you...then he will most certainly try to distract you.

- He will do whatever he can to get your eyes, your mind and your heart off of what matters most, leaving you vulnerable to a blindsided attack.
- His arrows might not be aimed AT you, they're aimed AROUND you...strategically.
 - News cycles, political ideologies, social media campaigns, consumerism, materialism...you name it.
- Satan so often uses these things to turn our attention off of Jesus so that he attack us from the flank. He's like:
 - If I can just get the Christians to spend all their energy ranting on FB about politics...
 - If I can just get the Christians to spend all their down time watching Netflix.
 - If I can just get the Christians to spend all their resources on Amazon...
- And then, when most of our attention is focused on things that aren't spiritual, then he can start attacking the things in our life that are spiritual.
- Distraction is an effective tactic of the enemy. Maybe the most effective, because we don't realize what's happening.

In all of this we must recognize that Satan's ultimate goal (desire) is the destruction of those who belong to God.

- You have a spiritual enemy who is hellbent on the destruction of your life.
- He's not a spiritual prankster, or even a bully.
- The bible calls Satan the "tempter", the "accuser of the brethren" and the "father of lies"...
- The "wicked one" as it says in our passage.
- Satan wants nothing more than to see your life go up in flames.
- And he will stop at nothing to make that happen.
- He will lie, cheat, steal, distort, manipulate..
- He will scorch the earth if he has to.
- In John 10, Jesus says that Satan's purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy.

Satan is smarter than you, he is more cunning than you, he's been fighting longer than you and in our own strength and wisdom we are utterly powerless to stand against his tactics.

- ▶ Sometimes it's easy to be convinced that we will know when the enemy attacks.
- ▶ "When the enemy attacks, I'll know it."
- ▶ We wait for the big bad, obvious thing to happen, when all the while he is at work attacking our thoughts, our feelings, and our identity. And we are completely unaware.
- ▶ Often times Satan shoots a sniper rifle instead of a grenade launcher. And he is an expert marksman.
- ▶ We need HELP. We need PROTECTION. We need a SHIELD.

And Paul says that our first line of defense against Satan's destructive arrows is faith.

- ▶ **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. (V16)**
- ▶ When I think of the primary function of a shield, "extinguishing" is not the first thing that comes to mind.
- ▶ If Paul said..."Take up the HOSE of faith, with which you can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one."...that would have made a lot more sense.
- ▶ A shield protects, but how does a shield EXTINGUISH anything?

Paul is getting at something deeper here.

- ▶ The Soldiers of Rome had a unique strategy to mitigate these flaming arrows.
- ▶ Before battle, they would take animal skin, soak it in water, and wrap it around the shield.
- ▶ This layer of moisture extinguished the firey part of the arrow before it could reach the inner layer of wood, thereby preventing the shield from igniting.

This is a massive clue for us as to how we appropriate the shield of faith in our lives.

- ▶ **In the same way that a roman shield was meant to be saturated with water, so too is the faith of the christian meant to be saturated in the truth of God's word, in the presence of His Holy Spirit, and in the fellowship of Christian community.**

It is a saturated faith that extinguishes the flaming arrows of the enemy.

- ▶ The lies the enemy hurls at us have no fuel to burn when our minds have been saturated with the truth and promises of God.
- ▶ The anxiety that Satan volleys at us has no room to spread when our hearts have been saturated with the peace that comes from spending time in His presence.
- ▶ The discouragement that the devil fires at us has no room to blaze when our lives are saturated by godly relationships with those who remind us of His faithfulness in our lives.

- ▶ Men and women who are not afraid to tell us what we need to hear, but always faithful to point us back to Jesus.

The Shield of faith is not something that we were meant to take up on our own. It is something that we take up together.

- ▶ The scutum (the roman shield) was designed so that it could connect with the shields of other soldiers.
- ▶ In battle, a Roman squadron would take what was known as the *testudo* formation.
- ▶ *Testudo* = tortoise in latin. A very appropriate descriptor.
- ▶ The soldiers in front would interlock their shields with one another, and the soldiers in the rear would raise their shield above their heads.
- ▶ This allowed the entire platoon to move through the battle with security and confidence.
- ▶ If one member was struck, the rest of the men would envelop the wounded soldier, protecting him until he could be extracted to safety.

Our shared faith in Christ is like an impenetrable fortress to the tactics of the enemy.

- ▶ This means that we not only have a responsibility to take up the shield of faith in our own lives, we actually have a responsibility to take up the shield of faith for our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- ▶ Your faith is inextricably connected to mine, and vice versa.
- ▶ Can you imagine if you were standing next to me in battle formation, and I forgot my shield?
- ▶ You would NOT be stoked.
- ▶ Nor would you be stoked if, all of a sudden, my shield BURST INTO FLAMES!
- ▶ We must recognize that we're all in the same battle, standing shoulder to shoulder against the same spiritual enemy.
- ▶ **1 PETER 5:9**
⁹ Resist him and be firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.
- ▶ Our faith matters to one another!
- ▶ We have a responsibility to the people around us to keep our faith dripping wet with the Truth of God's Word, the power of His presence, and the encouragement of fellow believers.

This is one of the main reasons that spiritual practices are so important to the life of the Christian!

- ▶ We don't say "read your bible more" because it's a good line item on your spiritual checklist.
- ▶ We don't say "participate in worship" because "that's just what we do on Sundays"
- ▶ We don't say "join a community group" because we like putting introverts in awkward social situations.

- These practices are so important because these are the ways in which we saturate our faith, protecting us (and those around us) from becoming engulfed by the fiery schemes of the enemy.
- Spiritual practice is how we appropriate the armor of God in our lives.

So if you find yourself wondering (as I often do) why all it takes is...

- That one little comment from your spouse...
- That one little email from your boss or your coworker...
- That one little search on WebMD...
- That one little image on Instagram
- That one little thought of shame or anxiety or jealousy or entitlement or bitterness...
- If all it takes is one little thing to set your soul ablaze...

...then chances are that you have a dry shield.

- Most likely your faith isn't saturated with the truth, presence, and community of God.
- I know that for some of us that might be difficult to hear. I need to hear this just as much as anyone else.
- If we're unwilling to engage scripture...
- If we're uninterested in the practice of prayer and worship...
- If we're unenthusiastic about community...
- Then we shouldn't be surprised when the arrows of the enemy lodge themselves in our minds and our hearts and burn out of control.

But if that's you, then the good news is that it's not too late.

- It's not too late to pick up your Bible and start saturating yourself in the truth and promises of God's word.
- It's not too late to start immersing yourself in His presence through the practice of prayer and worship. (Second set)
- It's not too late to start engaging with other believers and immerse yourself in Christian community.
- It's not too late to saturate your faith.

A dry faith is fuel for the enemy to have his way in our lives. But a faith that is soaked in Jesus will withstand whatever artillery Satan fires against it.

- And Paul says, take it up. Stand firmly with your faith in hand and resist the enemy.

I want to close this morning by reading from Psalm 28.

- **PSALM 28:6-8**

- ▶ ⁶ Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy. ⁷ The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him. ⁸ The Lord is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.

Our faith is not in our faith. Our faith is in God who is our shield and our fortress.

- ▶ To take up the shield of faith is to trust and believe in...
 - ▶ the one who has authority over the Satan.
 - ▶ the one who is seated far above all rulers, and authorities, every spiritual force of wickedness.
 - ▶ the one who, on the Cross, made a public spectacle of the enemy.
 - ▶ the one who was pierced for our transgression, so that we would not be pierced by the enemy's arrows of accusation.
 - ▶ the one with the power to silence every lie, calm every fear, extinguish every accusation.

Trust Him. Immerse yourself in Him. Saturate yourself with Him. Put your faith in Him. Worship Him.

PRAY

Invite: If you feel like you have a dry shield, raise your hand.

Invite: If you need a shield. Jesus gave up His protection so that you could have protection. He gave

Opportunity: Saturate yourself in His presence. You don't need to wait until you get home. Presence of God is here.