

CHIEF MINISTRIES

March 2020

Last month in writing about overcoming the enemy with the armor of God, I covered Truth, Righteousness, and Peace. This month we'll discuss Faith, Salvation, and God's Word.

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

"above all, taking the Shield of Faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." (Ephesians 6:16)

We must first address the phrase, "Above all," because it adds a lot of depth to our understanding of faith as spiritual armor. The Greek language could be translated, "in addition to," in which case Paul would be saying, "Not only do you need the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the gospel shoes of peace, but you also need the shield of faith." But the phrase could also be translated, "Overall," in which case Paul is saying, "Covering and protecting all the pieces of God's armor is the shield of faith." Either way you look at it, Paul is emphasizing the importance of faith in spiritual warfare.

The writer of the Hebrews says it is impossible to please God without faith. *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* (Hebrews 11:6 ESV).

Furthermore, if we ever doubt the vital significance of faith, all we need to do is research how often Jesus talked about it. He commended people for their faith and even marveled at the centurions faith: *When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith."* (Matthew 8:10 ESV).

Jesus also marveled at unbelief, however, He appeared disappointed and even exasperated when people had no faith, such as when His disciples had no faith during a storm: *And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ^{v40} He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"* (Mark 4:39-40 ESV).

Jesus told many who were healed that they were healed because of their faith: *And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."* (Luke 8:48 ESV).

The Bible even says that Jesus himself could not do many miracles in His hometown because the people lacked faith: *And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* (Matthew 13:58 ESV).

The shield of faith, therefore, is a part of God's armor that we need to study well! *In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;* (Ephesians 6:16 ESV).

The Greek word translated "shield" tells us a lot because there were two kinds of shields in Paul's time. The word is *thureos*, which refers to the Roman soldiers *scutum*, the larger shield which was the size of the door. It

was a big, well-constructed, and fully protected the warrior in battle. The shield was the first piece of armor that came in contact with the enemy, so it had to be strong and formidable.

When the enemy attacks, our faith will meet him and defeat him!

In Paul's day, soldiers often dipped their arrows into combustible fluids and lit them so that their arrows would burn whatever they hit. No doubt, these "fire arrows" were what Paul was referring to when he mentioned the "fiery darts of the wicked." When soldiers saw the enemy was using fiery darts, they immediately prepared their shields, which were made of an iron frame covered with layers of leather. They would soak their shields in water so that when a fiery dart hit, it would fizzle out in a puff of smoke.

With what are we to soak our shields? Throughout Scripture, water is a symbol for the Word of God: *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (Ephesians 5:26 ESV).*

Paul says that our faith grows, matures, and gains strength by reading, studying, meditating upon and living by the Word of God: *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17 ESV).*

To win the victory in spiritual warfare, you must soak your mind with the Word of God. Your faith in God's Word and knowing God's Word, that unshakable confidence and trust in the reliability of what God says, will quench every fiery dart of the enemy. The more you read the Word of God, the more you will think the Word, feel the Word, and respond with the Word. The more your faith grows, the more your life will reflect the Word, be grounded in the Word, and be in complete alignment with the Word.

Whatever the enemy shoots your way isn't going to sting if you know the Word because your faith and trust will be entirely in Jesus, the Living Word. You will have no fear of what the devil and his demons will do to you because you will be walking hand in hand and arm in arm with a King of kings and the Lord of lords.

The fiery darts will hit your shield with, "You're going crazy! The stress of all your problems is too much for you. You'll never make it!" Your shield will quench it with, "*Philippians 4:13 says that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!*"

The fiery dart will hit your shield with, "Flu season is coming! Get ready to be sick!" Your shield will quench it with, "*2 Peter 2:24 and Isaiah 53:5 declare that by the stripes of Jesus Christ, I am healed!*"

The fiery dart will hit your shield with, "Look around you. This world is out of control with earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and volcanic eruptions. Coronavirus is taking over, Boeing jets are crashing, trains are derailed, and gang violence is on the rise in the streets!" Your shield will quench it with, "Read Psalm 91, Devil! Read 2 Timothy 1:7! *I dwell in the secret place of the Most High and fear nothing because I have the love of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the mind of Christ!*"

Paul did not say that knowing the Word would keep the devil from shooting fiery darts at you! What he said was that when the devil shoots his arrows, the Word of God that is in you will protect you. The fiery darts won't break your heart or penetrate your soul. They won't cause a firestorm of worry, frustration, depression, or anxiety in your life. *No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.*"(Isaiah 54:17 ESV).

Rumors, innuendos and false reports may be fired against you, but they won't hurt your heart if you have your

faith saturated with God's Word. The devil may come at you with all kinds of threats, accusation and lies, but they won't lodge in your spirit and burn there if you have your faith saturated with God's Word. Satan may tempt you with worldly riches and honor and power, but the Word of God in you will give you the strength to resist and the devil will flee!

The shield of faith meets the attack of the enemy with God's Word, and our un-swerving trust in our God makes it impossible for the devil to prevail.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

And take the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17).

Some parts of the Roman soldier's armor were elaborate and expensive because they were designed to make a statement of indomitable strength and authority. Other than the large shield, the helmet made the biggest impression. It covered the head entirely, including cheek pieces, and it was made of bronze, with ornate carvings and etchings. To help the soldier bear the weight of the helmet, it was lined with a soft, spongy material.

The helmet was extremely heavy and only the sharpest axe or heaviest hammer could pierce it. Without this kind of protection, the soldier would quickly lose his head! But the helmet also had the most flamboyant feature in the entire armor of God: a tall plume on top made of feathers or horsehair. This plume was extremely striking and made the soldier look as much as two foot taller than he actually was.

By calling this piece of armor "the helmet of salvation," Paul could not have made a more powerful statement about our redemption. When we truly understand and appreciate that we are eternally, perfectly and absolutely saved, that we are forgiven and cleansed through the blood of Jesus Christ, and that we are completely reconciled to God, we stand ten feet tall! Hallelujah!

When we know we are God's child and walk in His presence, people notice our confidence and strength. They sense a courage and strength about us. Furthermore, when everyone around us is "losing their heads" because of the stresses and strains of life, we keep ours because of the joy of our salvation!

Because the helmet of salvation covers the head, Paul is saying that our minds must be stayed at all times upon the most basic of all spiritual truths. We are saved. We must keep this reality at the forefront of our thinking always. So many Christians today spend the bulk of their praise time rejoicing over the fact that the Lord has given them power and authority. They are thanking God for this gift and that healing and another person's deliverance. This is good, but Jesus told us specifically that there was only one reason to praise God and rejoice. *Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.* (Luke 10:20 ESV).

The disciples had just returned from casting out demons and healing the sick all over the countryside, and they were rejoicing at their newfound authority. Jesus pulled them back to center by reminding them that none of this was possible without salvation. None of the blessings of this life compared to the eternal life we have in Christ Jesus.

Rejoice that you are saved! You have eternal life! Your sins have been cast as far from you as the east is from the west and the slate of your soul has been wiped clean! You have no reason for guilt, no reason for shame, and you can remind the devil of that fact when he tries to bring up the past. No matter what he says to you, just

say right back, “Satan, I’m saved, and you cannot touch me, deceive me, or defeat me. Jesus Christ died on the cross for me. He shed His blood for me, and when I gave my life to Him my sins were forgiven, and I became heaven bound. Nothing can ever change the fact that I am a child of God. I’m saved and I’m going to live forever with Him.”

If things look bad today, you are saved!

If things are not turning out as you thought they would, you are saved!

If you don’t yet have all the things you have been promised by God, you are saved!

No matter what others may think about you, say about you, or do to you, you are saved!

Your salvation is the greatest blessing you can ever know and the greatest gift you can ever receive.

Putting on the helmet of salvation means dwelling on your salvation. Meditate on it.

Remind yourself of it. The devil cannot upset or distract a mind that is focused on the blessed salvation of Jesus Christ, and the reality of knowing your salvation will make you stand ten feet tall in the Spirit!

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

.....and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)

Our belt of truth, our breastplate of righteousness, our helmet of salvation, our gospel shoes of peace, and our shield of faith are all defensive armor. But now we must put on the one piece of offense armor we are given: “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” When we hear the word “sword”, we immediately imagine pirates, Robin Hood or Zorro wielding long swords that have fancy handles. But the Greek word Paul chose for “sword” in this verse is *machairan*, which refers to a dagger. He chose a large knife like weapon over the heavy broadswords (the one Robin Hood used) and the lighter foil-like version (the one Zorro used). By using *machairan*, Paul indicates that we fight spiritual battles at close range. *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12 ESV).*

This verse in Hebrews provides even more information about the dagger. The word “quick” is the Greek word *zoon* which means “life”. The Word of God is alive, powerful and sharp. It has pinpoint accuracy to determine exactly what is going on in our lives. When we enter into spiritual warfare, we come nose to nose with the devil and every wickedness of this world system. So, it is imperative that we have a weapon that is capable of rendering the enemy powerless. Because Jesus is our captain, let’s see how He dealt with Satan.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. v2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. v3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” v4 But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”” v5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple v6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,” and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”” v7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” v8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. v9 And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” v10 Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” v11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. (Matthew 4:1-11 ESV).

Three times the devil came to Jesus with powerful temptations, and three times the only weapon Jesus used to fight him was the Word of God. Again and again, He said, “it is written,” and Satan finally had to give up and leave Him alone.

To wield the Word of God in battle, however, you have to know the Word of God. We cannot just memorize it and give it mental nascent. We have to have it hidden deep in our hearts. The only way for that to happen is to read it, study it, hear it and keep reading, studying and hearing it until we “know” it – for example; until we know that we are the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ as well as we know our own name.

The Word of God must be “quick” or alive in your mind and heart, and then it will be “powerful” when you speak it in a time of crisis or battle. God’s Word should be your automatic response to every challenge of life.

If the situation incites praise and thanksgiving, then the word of thanksgiving and praise should come alive in your mind and heart and then flow in power from your lips.

If the situation demands confrontation in the spirit, then a word of rebuke or deliverance should come alive in your mind and heart and then flow in power from your lips.

If the situation is rooted in falsehood or guilt or shame or lies, then a word of truth should come alive in your mind and heart and then flow in power from your lips.

If you really want to do damage to the enemy in the spirit realm, declare the Word of God to him from your heart! He may hang around for a while to see if you really mean it, if the Word is really alive in you; but if it is, eventually this dead, corrupt evil spirit won’t be able to endure being continually stabbed and cut with the very life of God, and he will flee!

Now, you are completely fitted in God’s magnificent armor. You have washed yourself with truth, identified with Christ in righteousness, established your will in God’s peace, placed your faith and trust only in Him, raised your spiritual stature by focusing on your awesome salvation, and gripped the Word of God in your heart and mind. The time has come for you to take the Promised Land!

Stay suited!

Warfare is going to intensify there where you are at. Greater exposure is going to come to reveal those who are truly His! Get rid of the junk in your lives. Be a part of the greatest move this world has ever seen. Be ready!

Your co-warrior,

Chief

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Christ’s Heart In Every Felon