

Ephesians 6:16

Picking Up Your Shield of Faith

Around 1980 there was a Christian group named Harvest who put out a number of hits. You can look them up on YouTube. They have some great songs.

One of the songs was titled “The army of the Lord.” Here are the opening lyrics.

**Are we walking into the enemies camp
Laying our weapons down
Shedding our armor as we go
Leaving it on the ground
We’ve got to be strong in the Power of his Might
Prove to the enemy
We are the army of the Lord and we’ve won the victory**

I thought they posed a great question for us today. Are we walking into the enemies camp, laying our weapons down, shedding our armor as we go, leaving it on the ground.

That is the question isn’t it? Realizing that we are in a spiritual battle against rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness, is every piece of the spiritual armor of God available to us firmly in place? Or have we shed it, set it aside, leaving it on the ground?

As we move on into our teaching of the armor of God we come to the shield of faith.

Ephesians 6:16, “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.”

In a battle, the shield is one of the most important pieces of armor. As a soldier takes up the shield and goes into battle he is able to deflect many of the arrows and blows from swords or other attacks.

While it is true, the soldier has a breastplate of armor protecting his torso and a helmet protecting his head, the soldier doesn't want to take to many blows to the head or chest. It is better to deflect or absorb the blows away from the body, protecting it.

This is what the shield of faith will do. It is the first line of protection. It creates a protective barrier between oneself and the attacks. We take up the shield of faith by standing on the promises of God.

I think over the last few weeks we have identified what Satan is up to. He is out to kill, steal and destroy anything or anyone whose desire is to advance God's kingdom.

If you are desiring to advance, grow in your personal knowledge and relationship with Jesus Christ than that would be you. If you grow in Christ then Satan knows it will ultimately help God's kingdom grow. That is just the way it works.

So according to this verse he is trying to pierce your heart and your mind with arrows that are flaming. By flaming I think Paul is thinking the arrows will consume and burn you up, taking you out of the fight.

Look with me at some of the promises of God we can stand on.

Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

Matthew 11:28-29, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and

learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Isaiah 40:29-31, “He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”

Philippians 4:19, “And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:37-39, “...despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.”

When Satan is trying to shove doubt and anxiety down your throat... you pick up your shield of faith by saying no! I will not go there. I will not allow Satan to fill my mind with his worthless, degrading thoughts, I am a child of the most high God. I am worthy because Jesus in me is worthy. I am victorious because Jesus has already defeated Satan and many other promises like the ones listed here.

When you pick up your shield, stand on the promises of God, your faith is activated and God begins to give you the victory.

Look with me at Hebrews 11:6, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

When we stand upon God’s promises, when we pick up our shield of faith, God sees this and He rewards us with victory over depression, anxiety, insecurity and many other flaming arrows. We please Him by

asking Him to step in and be our shield. It is what He wants to do. It is part of His existence. To be your shield and your protector. But you must pick up the shield by coming to Him and standing firm with Him on His promises.

Now, the shield of faith not only protects us from attacks but also in its protection a soldier can advance into areas of their faith where they will see God's mighty power at work on their behalf.

During one of His teachings Jesus made an interesting statement when He said, **Luke 18:8b, "...when the Son of Man (Jesus) comes, will He find faith on the earth."**

As we read this passage I think most people's natural assumption is, of course there will be faith. There are a lot of people who believe in Jesus. But I don't think this was what Jesus was talking about.

Jesus's brother James said the following in the book he wrote. **James 2:19, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is dead."**

Having faith that Jesus and God exists is different than having the faith to move mountains. Faith that there is a God and that Jesus did live, die and rose again is not enough to be saved. The demons all witnessed this as it happened and as this passage in James says, they believe and shudder.

In a person's life who is moving into salvation, the conviction of the Holy Spirit moves them into the work of repentance. This is the first work in keeping with their salvation.

Showing faith by picking up the shield of God's promises is another work I think James was talking about. But the faith I believe Jesus and James was speaking about was not just saving faith, it might have been

partially this, but I think the faith He was speaking of was a faith in God, in what He wants to do powerfully do in and through a person who trusts Him completely.

Let's first think about what lack of faith like.

You know Jesus had a great ministry of healing, casting out demons, teaching, feeding thousands from a couple of loaves and fishes and many other miracles. Raising the dead, walking on water, calming the storm.

When He traveled back Nazareth, the town He was raised in this is what it says in **Mark 6:5-6**, **“And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He was amazed at their lack of faith.”**

In other parts of the country Jesus was able to perform a number of different kinds of miracles but in Nazareth He was limited to just a few due to the people's lack of faith.

On the opposite side of this is a story of faith found in Matthew 6. A roman soldier came to Jesus asking for his servant who was paralyzed to be healed. Jesus agrees to go and heal him but the soldier says no, you do not need to come to my house to heal him. Say it is done and I believe it will be done.

In verse 10 we are told, **Matthew 8:10, 13**, **“Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, ‘Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.’ And Jesus said to the soldier, ‘Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed.’ And the servant was healed that very hour.”**

This story helps us to understand the difference between a faith that believes Jesus and God is and a faith that allows Jesus to perform miracles in our life.

Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Think about this passage. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

The Roman soldier didn't see the healing of his servant but on the word of God he was okay. He was ready to move from Jesus' presence and head home.

How many of us could have walked away from Jesus with the assurance that our servant was healed.

Pause

When we are faced with different circumstances in our lives, if you are like me then you look at the problem and begin to reason out the different outcomes. That doesn't take faith. You see the problem, you think through the possible pathways to a solution that you hope will occur, you make a decision and head off on that path.

Our minds work in $A + b = c$. $1 + 2 = 3$. We rationalize our problems and come up with a solution.

What would it look like though if you had a problem but you decided to step back away from it. You tried not to think through it, you kept your mind blank about possible solutions and how to get there. You began praying about it, praying for yourself to keep your mind blank about it and leave the solution to God.

Seems like this would be a pretty hard thing to do for can do it type of people right?

Well, that is the kind of faith God is looking for.

Well, believe it or not that is what I am going to leave you with this week to think about.

What does faith look like?

I would like for you to ponder and pray over these scriptures as I will and we will see what God has for us next week.