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Ephesians 6:16, The Shield of Faith

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Do you ever feel like you are under attack? Do you feel like Satan is trying to do everything he can to wreck your spiritual walk with God. Do you feel like the devil is trying to destroy your life with pains and difficulties? He is. The apostle Peter described the devil as prowling around as a roaring lion seeking anyone he can devour (1 Peter 5:8). When we feel like we are under the attack of Satan, we must accept the reality that we are! The devil is real and he is the evil one who is attacking us in all kinds of ways. The apostle Paul also describes the attack of the devil as shooting flaming arrows at us in Ephesians 6:16.

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)

Paul describes the shield of faith as a powerful tool in our stand against the devil and the evil forces of darkness. The shield of faith has the power to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. I want us to consider what Paul just said. This armor will not stop a few flaming darts of the evil one. When put on and used properly, the shield of faith will extinguish ALL the flaming darts. Think about this: all of the arrows. God has given us a powerful shield so that we can stand spiritually. The apostle Peter used the same imagery at the beginning of his first letter, declaring that through faith we are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3–5 NIV)

How is the devil attacking you right now? Perhaps it is through the guilt of sin that makes you want to quit your faith. Are you fighting through physical suffering? Are you dealing with sickness? Are you dealing with death? Are you dealing with immorality? What is the attack of the devil on you right now? What arrows are hitting you that you need the shield of faith to extinguish? Paul is telling us that these attacks can be dampened and thwarted with faith. So I want us to start with the thought of hope. You are not doomed to be destroyed by the attack of the devil. God has given armor so that we can stand during this attack. It is not hopeless. It is not too difficult. I think that it is easy during difficult times to reach a very dark place where we can convince ourselves that there is no hope, no help, and no way out. This kind of thinking leads to depression and perhaps even suicidal thoughts. The devil wants us to be in this dark place where it feels like there is no way out. He wants us to think that there is no help or hope. So I want to begin this lesson with hope. It is not too hard and it is not impossible. There is God's shield of faith for you so that you can extinguish the devil's attack.

Notice how Paul begins this sentence in verse 16. "In all circumstances..." Your translation may say, "In addition to all" or "above all." The phrase is literally, "In everything" so all of these translations are correct. In every situation and in addition to the rest of the armor of God, the shield of faith is necessary. Every day we need this shield because the attack of the devil is very real and continuous. So how are we to survive these attacks? The apostle Paul's answer is faith. This is why the scriptures repeatedly teach that the life of the believer is one of faith.

Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith. (Habakkuk 2:4 ESV)

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17 ESV)

Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." (Galatians 3:11 ESV)

For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:37–38 ESV)

Why Faith?

Why is faith the answer? Perhaps it is even better to ask, "How is faith the answer?" John said this even more strongly.

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (1 John 5:4 ESV)

So why is faith the solution? Why is faith the shield to quench the flaming arrows of temptation, trials, difficulty, and suffering that the devil shoots at us? Faith is the solution because unbelief is the basis for sin. Why did Eve eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden? Yes, we read in Genesis 3 that it was pleasing to the eyes, it was good for food, and it was able to make her wise. But why did she eat it? Why

did she succumb to the temptation of the devil? She lacked faith in God's command and in God's love to seek the best interest of his creation. She did not believe that the command of God and the love of God was in her best interest and for her good. She listened to the lie of Satan that told her that God was holding out on her and keeping her from joy and pleasure. Unbelief was the cause of her falling to the temptation. This is why faith is the shield to extinguish the flaming arrows of the devil. We do not believe that we can be satisfied by what God has given us or by what God has to offer. We lack faith in our Lord and listen to the lie of the devil. Lack of faith is the reason we fall. Lack of faith is the reason we succumb to the devil's temptations. We do not believe that God is working for us. We do not believe that God's way is best. We do not believe that God's laws are for our good. We do not believe that God is not keeping us from the good life. We do not believe that God loves us and cares deeply about us. This is why faith is so necessary. Faith is at the heart of the problem. Do we believe in God or not?

Building Faith

So we need the shield of faith that God supplies. We need the strength that he gives so that we will reject temptations and not give up our faith during difficult and dark times. How can we take the shield of faith and wear it every day?

Look to the cross. The cross is intended to be the greatest builder of faith in our God for life. Listen to the words of Paul.

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32 ESV)

What else would God keep from us? How can we not believe that God is acting for us and in our best interests when we look to the cross? If he gave his own Son, are we going to suggest that God is holding back from us? Is God keeping us from something better when he has proven that he will give up anything for our own good? No one has your interests covered better than our Lord! The cross teaches us that God alone is all-satisfying for he gives us all that we need.

Look to the future. Second, the scriptures teach us to look to the future as a means to build our faith. Listen to how the writer of Hebrews pictures this.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:13–16 ESV)

These people who had faith in the Lord and died in faith recognized that they were strangers on this earth and were looking for the better home with God. They desire a better country, the heavenly land that God has prepared. Faith is strengthened by looking to where we are going, not by living life as if this life is all that life has to offer. We look forward to the better land that has been secured by Jesus through the cross.

Look to the scriptures. Finally, we look to the scriptures because God is the giver of the faith we need.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17 ESV)

God gives faith through his words and our listening to his words. Faith will not be found any other way. We will not find faith by going to worship more. We will not find faith by trying to straighten out some other externals. Faith comes by hearing God's word and letting those words hit the heart. The context of Romans 10 is that Israel did hear the word but they were obstinate and contrary to the pleadings of the Lord. God has given us the armor to stand. He has given us the shield of faith so that we will extinguish the flaming arrows of the devil. But will we set aside our stubborn ways and let the word of Christ create faith in our hearts? Look to the scriptures for the strength we need to build our faith so that enjoy a life in Jesus and reject the lies of the devil.

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