

“The Shield of Faith”
Ephesians 6:16
(Preached at Trinity March 6, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul is describing the Christian warfare. As we've seen, we need to engage the enemy with courage and strength. But our strength is not our own.
Ephesians 6:10-11 NAS - "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might."
2. We also need strong armor that is also not our own.
Ephesians 6:11 NAS - "Put on the full armor of God"
3. It is God's strength and God's armor, and yet we are told to "be strong," "put on," "take up the full armor," "stand firm."
In other words, we must fight valiantly as the mighty soldiers of Christ.
4. In **Verse 11** Paul commands, "Put on the full armor of God"
Paul is describing the armor in a particular order. This would have been the order in which it was put on by the soldier.
 - A. Paul describes the first piece of armor as a belt; a girdle worn around the waist. This belt was put on before anything else. It held the loose clothing in place so the warrior could march forth unhindered. Paul calls this belt truth. This is something we must actively put on in order for us to be adequately prepared for battle.
 - B. The second piece of armor is a breastplate that Paul designates as righteousness. This was an important piece of armor covering all of the vital organs. This righteousness must involve our entire being. It defines us, characterizes us. It gives us confidence before God. It equips us to stand against the lies and accusations of Satan.
 - C. The third piece of armor is Gospel shoes. The soldier's shoes protected the feet and allowed the necessary mobility for war. The Gospel provides us protection, mobility, and confidence as we battle with Satan.
5. As we've seen, this armor is given in the order the soldier put it on. He first pulled his tunic up and secured it around the waist to allow for free movement. Then he covered his torso with a breastplate. This protected all of the vital organs. Then he put on his shoes in preparation for agility and movement.
6. Now he takes hold of his shield which would protect him from the arrows of the archers and the thrusts of swords and spears. The shield pictured here was the large rectangular shield that protected the whole body rather than the small round shield worn on the left arm. They were two feet wide and over four feet long. When the soldiers advanced the shields side by side formed a solid wall.
Arrows were sometimes dipped in pitch or some other flammable material and set on fire. They would not only wound but also inflict terrible pain. At times the sky would be filled with flaming arrows and the troops would crouch behind these large shields.

7. Paul uses vivid imagery here as if Satan's arrows are dipped in the fiery brimstone of hell. The Christian faith is an impervious shield that is able to extinguish the fiery arrows of Satan. This faith is more than just an intellectual understanding. It is an absolute trust in what God has spoken.
1. It is the outworking of the new birth which must precede this faith.
 2. It enables the believer to call upon and trust in God
It is the ability to embrace the promises of God - the ability to wait upon God for the performance of them
 3. The protection isn't so much in faith itself but in the object of our faith.
Paul began this section:
"be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might."
8. The Christian is strengthened by faith - faith is his shield against the attacks of Satan. We can also see in Paul's imagery the importance of the body of Christ, the community of faith. Like the wall of Roman shields, Christians are strengthened by the faith of each other.
- I. Consider again the nature of the attack - Satan's fiery darts
- A. Satan brings wicked thoughts into our mind - apparently from nowhere
 1. Nothing so characterizes Satan's attacks as his subtlety
Genesis 3:1 NAS - "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made."
 2. Satan's arrows fly forth suddenly and in secret. Their source is often unknown. They can come forth from our own mind. They can fly from the tongue of a fellow Christian, a beloved husband or wife. Satan's fiery arrows often come in the form of a tongue.
James 3:6 NAU - "And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell."
 - a. Satan used Job's wife to discourage him in his suffering
Job 2:9 NAU - "Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"
 - b. Who would have suspected flaming arrows to come from the lips of Peter?
Matthew 16:22-23 NAS - "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."
 - c. Satan is so crafty we seldom recognize that our tongues are being utilized by the devil to attack God's people
 3. Most of the time we don't even recognize we are under attack. Wicked thoughts, thoughts of revenge, envy, jealousy. Censorious thoughts where we judge the intents of others. He enflames bitterness, intensifies hurt feelings. He turns thoughts towards self.
 4. He creates evil imaginations - passions and lusts with vivid realism
Satan then accuses us with those thoughts & imaginations

- B. Satan has many different kinds of arrows in his quiver. His fiery arrows take many forms
1. Sometimes they are arrows of distraction during worship and prayer
 - a. Jesus described them as seed sown by the wayside and the birds come and devour it
Matthew 13:19 NAU - "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart."
 - b. He infuses many distracting thoughts into our minds—the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches
 - c. We go away from worship feeling guilty because we know we participated very little in worship and can recall very little of the sermon
 - d. Worship demands preparation and a heart of faith directed towards God.
 2. Satan attacks us with fiery arrows of pride. He convinces us that we are better than others. He turns our eyes inward. Self rises to the forefront.
 - a. The desire for honor and recognition
The desire to be served rather than serve
 - b. Faith enables humility which removes the fuel of pride.
Remove the fuel and there is no flame
 3. Sometimes Satan shoots the arrows of discontent
 - a. Instead of joy in Christ we are discontented and unhappy, always looking for something new, something more
 - b. Satan draws our attention to our circumstances and away from Christ. Satan tempts us to murmur and complain.
 - c. By faith we look to the greatness and sufficiency of Christ. Faith keeps God's praise before us.
Job 13:15 NAU - "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him."
 4. Satan shoots his arrows of fear and anxiety at us –
 - a. He turns our eyes upon the uncertainty of our earthly condition and blinds us to the sovereign reign of God over all things
By faith we look steadfastly at the living God who rules all things by His mighty power
 - b. Sometimes the fears come as Satan causes us to look upon this world with dismay - this world can appear hopeless. Satan keeps our eyes upon politics or societal changes. We can become preoccupied with this world.
By faith we look to God who has assured us of His sovereign purpose. His Kingdom will never fail.
 5. Satan hurls his arrows of weariness at us. He tempts us to give up, to lose heart.
Galatians 6:9-10 NAU - "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary."
Psalms 61:2-4 NAU - "From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. ³ For You have been a refuge for me, A tower of strength against the enemy. "

6. There are the arrows of false doctrine.
 - a. These are particularly harmful
 - b. He uses people to sow these seeds
2 Cor. 11:13-15 NAS - "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds."
 - c. This is why the church is so important
Ephesians 4:13-15 NAU - "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,"

II. Let's consider the use of our shield

- A. It is our proper defense -
 - 1 Peter 5:8-9 NAU** - "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world."
 - 1 John 5:4 NAU** - "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith."
 1. Faith is essential to the Christian life
Hebrews 11:6 NAU - "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."
Hebrews 11:1 NAU - "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."
 2. It was by faith that we entered our life in Christ. It is by faith that we serve Christ. It is by faith that we press on in righteousness.
 3. It is by faith that we turn to God in times of difficulty
 4. Faith gives us the ability to apply what we believe - this is why we have to be grounded in the Word of God.
- B. It is a sure defense.
 1. Notice the power of this shield to extinguish all of Satan's arsenal of arrows.
Ephesians 6:16 NAU - "you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*."
 2. Our trust in God renders Satan's arrows harmless
James 4:7-8 NAU - "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

3. This faith is essential in the Christian life
Without this shield Satan's arrows of temptation go right through and pierce the heart.
4. By faith we are enabled to see Satan's arrows. They ricochet harmlessly off our shield. We are able to see the foolishness of sin and the greatness of God. Faith keeps Christ ever before our eyes.
Hebrews 12:1-2 NAU - "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith"
5. With every assault of Satan we find an all-powerful God
Paul said at the beginning of this section, "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might"
 - a. Satan hurls his arrows of doubt at us - we look straight at the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross and say, "I know whom I have believed..."
 - b. God told Moses:
Genesis 15:1 KJV - "Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward."
 - c. David exclaimed:
Psalms 46:1-2 KJV - "God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore will not we fear"
Psalms 18:2-3 KJV - "The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower. ³ I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies."

Conclusion:

1. We must take up our shield. We must continually look to Christ, the Author and finisher of our faith. We must pray always. We must give ourselves to the study of God's Word.
2. Our faith is strengthened by God's Spirit. Faith is part of His work in us.
3. Satan's attacks are unrelenting. But by faith His temptations lose their power.