

Shield of Faith | Ephesians 6:16

If you have your Bibles, turn to Ephesians 6. Let's pray.

Our Lord, we pray that You would give us faith. Lord, we don't believe You like we should. Our lives are evidence of our lack of faith. Our worry and anxiety displays how much we don't believe in You. Our poor prayer life is a ramification of our not believing in You. We pray little prayers. We ask for little things because we don't believe in You. Lord, forgive us of our unbelief. Store faith up in us. Grant us faith, dear God, we pray. This we pray in Your Son's name, Amen.

There are three elements to faith that are essential for faith to be faith, and that's knowledge... Without knowledge there is no faith. You have to have faith in something, so you need knowledge. You need the word of God if you're going to have faith in God. You need to have something to cast your faith upon, so knowledge is essential to faith. But you can have knowledge without faith, so knowledge is not faith in and of itself, but you also have to believe what you know, or consent to it, or be convicted of it, or convinced of it. That's essential to faith – believing it. And then the third element is trust, reliance, dependance, banking on it. All three of these things are necessary for there to be faith.

Now, we think about these three elements of faith but there's one more thing that faith needs, or to help us understand faith... Faith is not indivisible. Faith transcends the empirical senses You don't have faith just because you know and see and trust a chair. You don't have faith in a chair because there is plenty of empirical evidence to convince you it's trustworthy. You have to have faith in that which transcends the senses. You have to have faith in that which is invisible. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that faith is the evidence of things not seen. The Bible tells us that we walk by faith, not by sight. We're told that Noah, when he was warned about a flood and there were no raindrops, nothing to tell him that the flood was coming, but he trusted God against dependence upon what he saw. Abraham and Sarah were old in their age. All the evidence would point to the fact that they were not going to have children by this time. Abraham was seventy-five years old. And so he believed against the evidence because he had, not some leap of logic, but the word of God, the promise of God, and he believed God even though he was old.

Charles Spurgeon said, "If all my senses were to contradict God, I would deny every one of them and sooner believe myself to be out of my right mind than to believe that God could lie." Remember Peter and how he was able to walk on water for a little while? He had faith because he kept his eyes on Christ for a little while, but he took his eyes off Christ and he saw the storm, the waves, and the tempest, and he got scared. Then he couldn't walk on water any longer. The reason you don't believe God more than you do is because your eyes are on the physical things. You say, "I don't know if I can trust God with tomorrow." Some of you parents are so scared to death about tomorrow because of the decline of our culture, that you don't even know if you can raise your kids, and you don't have much hope in the salvation of your children because your eyes are upon this world.

Remember when Jesus said to Thomas, “You believe because you see, but blessed are those who believe and don’t see”? God is looking for people to trust Him. He’s looking for people who don’t need evidence to trust Him. At least, empirical evidence to trust Him. He’s looking for people who will rely upon Him, even when things don’t look good. This is what faith is. It’s dependence upon the word and promise of God, that He is faithful and cannot lie. The Bible tells us if we put our trust in Him, we will not be disappointed. It’s impossible for God to lie. If He said it, He will do it.

Now, we come to our text in verse 16 of chapter 6. We’ve been looking at the different pieces of the armor that we have to have to fight off Satan. And we come to faith. It says, *In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.* So, we’re going to look at taking up the shield of faith and we’ve got three points: when do we need to take it up? how are we to take it up? and why are we to take it up? The when, how, and why of the shield of faith.

First of all, we look in this first little phrase at the when. When do we need this shield of faith? The ESV says *in all circumstances*. Your version may say *above all, in all, in addition to*. The ESV says *in all circumstances*. The reason why there’s this difference is because, in the original, it simply reads *in all*. And so the interpreter or translator is trying to figure out *in all* “what”? *In all* of the other pieces of the armor? In addition to all those we need the shield of faith, as well? That’s one way of understanding it. The translators of the ESV applied *circumstances*. *In all* situations or circumstances. Now, we may go back and forth and try to debate which is the best translation, but it really doesn’t matter because they’re both essentially saying the same thing.

Either “don’t forget the shield of faith as you pick up all the other pieces because you’re going to need it”, or it says “in every situation, you’re going to need this.” In either/or, you’re going to need this shield of faith when you battle the evil one. And we battle him constantly day and night. You see, faith is essential to the victory. The victory that overcomes the world, 1 John 5 tells us, is our faith. So much so, that it is impossible to please God without it. Without faith, the Bible says, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Romans 14 tell us that whatever is not of faith is sin. So, you may have all the good works you want but if you have no faith, all those good works are counted as sin. What doesn’t come out of faith in God is not of God at all.

You see, in every circumstance, we need this shield. It’s the key to emotion control. You who suffer with anxiety, stress, and worry, you need this shield. And one reason that you’re so full of anxiety is that you’re not taking up the shield. You’re not picking it up. You need it. It’s the key to the Christian life. The Bible says the just doesn’t just get justified by faith; it says the just shall live by faith. You see, this is kind of the attribute in which all the other Christian attributes flow out of. Faith produces love. It works by love and thus faith is that which produces good works. It’s the key to salvation. You cannot even be a Christian without this. We’re saved by faith and not by works. We must live by faith. By simply trusting God with what He’s said and relying upon it.

How do we take this shield of faith up? We know we need it. That's a given. I need this shield. But I believe we have a tendency to lay it down everyday. We go to bed, we lay it down, and we forget to pick it back up when we get up. We're constantly struggling with doubt and unbelief. In fact, I'll be honest with you and myself, that you have a lot of unbelief in you. Your faith is small. The Bible says that if you just had a grain of faith, you could move a mountain. It means you have less than a grain of faith. You know, our brains are only using a small percentage of our capacity to think. I think faith is like that. We're just using a small portion of it.

We've heard this morning that it takes just the smallest fragment of faith to be saved. If you have faith, even the smallest amount, you're saved. I like what Spurgeon says. He didn't say you *will* be saved if you have faith; He said you *are* saved if you have faith. But yet we doubt. We're like Thomas in that we believe but we don't believe. So, picking up this shield literally means that we have to exercise our faith. And I know some people say, "No, no, faith is just a gift of God. You can't exercise it." And you can't exercise it. No, we do still have to exercise faith. We have to believe. It's a command that we must do. It says of Abraham that he grew in faith. He grew strong in faith. As he grew old, his faith grew stronger and stronger.

Faith is not just a deposit that we have that stays at the same measure that we began with. We are to cultivate, grow, and utilize faith. Remember the faith of the centurion? The Lord marveled at the centurion. He says, "You don't even have to come to my house. I know you're a Man of authority. You can just say it be done and it will be done." I mean, the others said, "I've got to touch Him. I've got to get in His presence." The centurion said, "I don't even need Him to come to my house. He can do it just by doing it." That's faith. That's stronger faith than a lot of the people had and the Lord marveled. He said, *Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.*

Remember the Canaanite woman? She cried out, "*Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.*" But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "*Send her away, for she is crying out after us.*" He answered, "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" Basically, "bug off." The disciples wanted her to leave them alone, and Christ says, "Hey, I'm not here for you." Sometimes, you pray and you don't get an answer and you're so quick to quit praying because you don't have much faith. But she wouldn't leave them alone. She said, "*Lord, help me.*" Basically, God is calling her a dog. You think she'd be insulted and leave, saying, "He's not going to hear me." But she said, "*Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.*" Then Jesus answered her, "*O woman, great is your faith!*" "You're able to hear me call you a dog. You're able for me to push you away and you kept coming and kept coming. Great is your faith. You wouldn't have kept coming unless you actually believed."

Some of you are not saved because you only pray little, simple prayers of unbelief. You've got to come to Christ. You can't take "no" for an answer. Say, "No, God, You said You will save me. That's Your word. I'm not hearing 'no'. I'm not going away empty-handed. I have to be blessed." You see, our faith can be mixed with such doubt. We have degrees of faith. But listen, brothers and sisters, you're only as useful to the degree that you have faith. Weak faith produces weak

results in your life. Strong faith produces strong results. You can't expect to do greater exploits beyond the level of faith that you have. You can't expect more prayers to be answered if you just don't have much faith. You say, "Jeff, Jeff, that sounds scary." No, this is the word of God. Matthew 9, *"Have mercy on us, Son of David."* When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, *"Do you believe that I am able to do this?"* They said to him, *"Yes, Lord."* Then he touched their eyes, saying, *"According to your faith be it done to you."*

In the measure of faith you have – according to your faith. Charles Spurgeon says, "Jesus would certainly go as far as ever the man's faith could go, but the rule of the kingdom is this: according to the faith, so it be unto thee, the man's unbelief hampered the Lord in His working and faith brings about God's work." And I know some of you hyper-calvinists are saying, "Woah, faith is a gift from God." Yes, I know that but don't blame God for your unbelief. Remember what it says about His own home-country of Nazareth? He could not do mighty works there because of their unbelief. Mark said it this way, *And he marveled because of their unbelief.*

If we're seeking God's glory and way, we should operate in faith expecting God to work in mighty ways. We should expect great things, William Cary said. We should attempt great things and expect great things. But we don't. Why don't we, as a church, say, "Let's send out a missionary to every country in this world"? Some of you want to stone me for saying something like that. Why not two to every country of this world? "Oh, let's just go short. Maybe we'll get one or two missionaries out." We don't think big. I tell you, the people of this world... Elon Musk thinks way bigger than we do and all he has is the power of the flesh to accomplish temporal things that will one day perish. We have the power of God, but we are so feeble in our expectations. But the Lord Himself said all things are possible for the one who believes. Now, we're not told to have health, wealth, and prosperity for us to want fleshly things that will deter us from a love for God. God doesn't want to give us things that hurt us, but if we delight ourselves in the things of God... "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done." If that is what we want, then why are we not expecting God to save our children? Believing God! Now, we can't believe for them, but we can believe God can save them.

Remember when the disciples couldn't cast out the demons and they came to Jesus? This is how He responded to the disciples: He said, *"O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me."* He was talking to the disciples. And they asked him, "Why couldn't we do it?" He said to them, *"Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."* What I love about faith is that God could do what He wants to do without us. He doesn't need us. But faith is that which unites the power of God, the work of God – God does it and He utilizes us in it.

But faith doesn't lead us to boast in ourselves. In the end, if we have great faith, it's not to say, "Hey look, I have great faith." No, the faith is in Christ doing it. The faith is in God doing it. You think Aaron, after he conquered the land, the walls of Jericho coming down, that he said, "Look what we did"? No, it was the work of God that did it. But by faith, he marched around those

walls. You see, we pick up the shield of faith by knowing the word of God. Faith comes by hearing, the Bible says, and hearing comes by the word of God. You say, "Well, I need more faith. I need to pick up this shield of faith." How do you do it? You root yourself in God's word. You meditate on God's word. You put the word of God in the forefront of your mind rather than your circumstances. Some of you who are worried about finances, you need to realize that this day your daily bread will be taken care of. God's made a promise to you, so don't worry. Look at the birds and the lilies. Both the birds and lilies of the field, they don't spin and vex themselves because of what they're going to eat or how they're going to dress themselves. That's how the gentiles act but not the children of God who says, "I'm going to take care of you."

George Mueller says, "Faith has nothing to do with your feelings or with impressions, with improbabilities or with outward experiences. If we desire to couple such things with faith, then we are no longer resting on the word of God because faith needs nothing of the kind. Faith rests on the naked word of God. When we take Him at His word, the heart is at peace." You see, we pick up the shield of faith by believing the promises of God. We can't create our own promises. We can't name it and say, "I want this promise, therefore God's going to fulfill the promise that I make." No, we take the promises of God and then we rest in them, rely upon them. Not just with our souls. We don't just trust God with our souls for salvation. Yes, we must. We trust God with everything we have. With our businesses, our relatives and families, our children. Everything that we're concerned about, we trust with God. The Bible tell us to ask our concerns upon Him.

We trust God's promises. The Bible says, *God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?* You here who may want to be saved, you want to be saved or you're thinking about being saved, know this: you can't save yourself by your own works, but Jesus Christ died on the cross to be your substitute, to take the wrath of God in your place. And you have nothing to give to God, but He promises you, He gives you His word. It's a universal promise. It's for all of you! Those who can hear my voice, this promise is for you. If you believe, you shall be saved. You are saved, if you believe. That's the promise. Believe it?

Those who put their trust in God shall not be disappointed. Woe to us if we go to Egypt and trust in the arm of the flesh or in horses, and not upon God. You trust God and pick up what shield of faith by prayer. The Bible says you have not because you ask not.

I know God is sovereign. And thank God that He's sovereign. But this verse means something. *You have not because you ask not.* Meaning, there are things that God would've given you if you would have just asked. But when you ask, you must not doubt. When you ask, you must believe and not doubt, James 1:6 says. Jesus put it this way, *Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.* Matthew 21:22, *Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.* Why not go big? Why not really align our affections, our hearts, our desires with the heart, affections, and desires of God? You know, put our prayers according to the will of God and then go big.

George Mueller was on his way to Canada from Newfoundland in the year 1877. He had to be there on a certain date and, in the middle of the journey, on the ship, the captain said, "We're not going to make it on time. We're going to be a day or two late because of the dense fog." George Mueller says, "That will not do. I have an appointment and I've never missed an appointment yet." They said, "I'm sorry but we cannot control the fog." And George Mueller said, "If you can't get me there, I will find someone who will." Now, I don't know what other ship's going to come by and take him. But he said, "We must go and pray to God." They went down into the cabin and George Mueller prayed a fervent prayer and afterwards the captain said, "I will pray with you." George Mueller said, "No, you shouldn't pray. One, you don't believe and two, God' already heard me. Go look, the fog has lifted." The captain goes out and the fog had lifted. And he made it on time, and the captain is the one who retold this story of the great faith of George Mueller.

But see, we don't have that faith. We pray little things and expect little from God. But know this: God answers prayers. God is more concerned about His own glory than you are. God is looking to show Himself strong. He's looking for men and women of faith. You don't have to be a missionary or a pastor. You can just be a prayer-warrior and accomplish great things because you believe.

Why do we need this shield? It's because the enemy's shooting fiery darts, arrows, and missiles at us. It says, *In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.* Your faith is under attack by Satan himself. I mean, Satan is trying to undermine your faith. He comes to you and he says, "Did God really say that?" I believe Satan's raised up the health, wealth, and prosperity ministry just to keep us from believing. Abuse it, twist it, pervert this glorious truth so that we conservatives don't pray. So that we don't trust God. It's a shame. Satan will use false teachings to keep us from believing a true teaching. Constantly, Satan is whispering in our ears "that verse" doesn't apply to us, or "that's" not applicable in this situation. "God did not really promise you that. You really do need to worry about tomorrow. You need to be vexed about it, because God's not going to take care of you. He's left you or will leave you. You can't rely upon Him. He's unreliable and untrustworthy. It's on you to take care of your situation. You need to think about how to fix your problems in your own flesh or depend upon someone else. Don't go to God because He's not listening."

That's Satan whispering to us and attacking us. The fiery darts are aimed right at us. Faith, however, will quench the flaming arrows of the evil one Faith is what rises us above everything. It gets us above the clouds where we can see God again. You see, Satan uses our senses against us. Imagine George Mueller having to feed all those orphans and one story goes that there was a time that he had no food to feed the children. He goes to the table with the children surrounding him and he begins to thank the Lord for the food. Food that he did not yet have. And before the prayer was closed, a door was knocking with food prepared for the children.

You see, Satan will say, "Look, the pantry's low. The bank account's empty." He'll use your circumstances, the waves of the sea, if you would, to get you to say, "I cannot walk. I cannot trust God." But you've got to take your eyes off of what you're seeing and put them on Christ,

back upon His word and promises. You see, Satan will use God's delays against us. You pray, you pray, then you grow weary in your prayer because God hasn't heard you. Imagine Abraham and Sarah... Abraham was seventy-five years old when God gave him a promise. Seventy-five. That's pretty old to be having a child. Now, don't you think it should be pretty soon, when that child comes, maybe when he's seventy-six, seventy-seven, eighty? You know how long God waited to fulfill that promise? Twenty-five long years. It would've been a miracle to have a child at seventy-five. Like Gideon, you've got too many people. You're still too young for this. It needs to be a little bit of a greater miracle.

Remember when Lazarus was laying sick? If Jesus would have gotten there, He could've rescued him and healed him before he died, but the Lord delayed. God's delay may be something that you've been praying about for years. You've been praying and praying and praying and the devil says, "Listen, quit praying. God says no. You know, Paul prayed three times for the thorn and God said no. God's telling you no. Quit praying." Paul heard God say "no". You don't quit praying for your children. You don't take "no" for that one.

You see, everything that will bring God glory, God's going to do and you can be certain of it. The only reason God won't answer a prayer is because it won't bring Him glory and it won't be good for you. You don't have to worry about God not wanting to answer good prayers that are according to His will and for His glory. The Bible says Abraham *grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God*. That's how you give glory to God—keep believing. "I'm going to trust God for this." I already told you last week that I'm having to push myself towards faith because I thought God would've already taken care of our growth issues. I've been looking to God, looking to God and "where is God." Listen, God is faithful even in delays. I'm certain that, whatever we thought we might've got yesterday, wouldn't have been the right thing, and God knows what we need and when we need it.

1 John 5:10 says, *Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar*. Abraham glorified God by believing in Him and trusting Him. God wants people to rely upon Him. God wants that. He delights in people depending upon Him. Like Hezekiah, "Lord, great are they. They're surrounding us and there are few with us. They have the might of the arm and they have strength, but we have You. Our eyes are looking to You. You're going to have to rescue us here." And God did. He stuck a mighty blow upon the Assyrians. George Mueller says, "Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in which it's humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends." That's why Gideon had too many people. George Mueller says, "The greater the difficulty, the easier for faith. The greater the trial, the sweeter the victory."

Your back might be up against the wall but God has not abandoned you. Keep looking. Keep your eyes on Him and He will come through, I promise you. I'm certain of it. This is what you must do to be saved. Do you believe that God will save you? Some of you are doubting in your assurance. Maybe you're saved but you just don't have assurance. You know, faith will give you some assurance. God cannot lie. You see, Satan seeks to foster anxiety, doubt, unbelief, and despair. I don't know about tomorrow, but I do know Who holds tomorrow. I want to live with

confidence in God. When I pray, to know that God is listening and hearing. You struggling mothers and fathers who are worried about your children, this is such a comfort to us, to know that God hears.

You say, "Well, George Mueller. That's George Mueller." How come there aren't more George Muellers? Why don't you be the next George Mueller? Spurgeon says, "You hear the exploits with holy men have done for Jesus. What they have enjoyed of Him, how much they have been like Him, how they have been able to endure great persecutions for His sake, and you say, 'Ah, as for me I am but a worm. I could never attain to this.' But there's nothing that one saint was that you may not be. There is no elevation of grace; no attainment of spirituality; no clearness of assurance; no post of duty which is not open to you if you have but the power to believe. Lay aside your sackcloth and ashes, and rise to the dignity of your true position. You're little in Israel because you will be so, not because there is any necessity for it. All things," Spurgeon says, "are possible to him that believes."

Do you believe that God can forgive you? Do you believe that God can help you overcome a sin in your life? To forgive you of your wickedness? Do you believe that? Do you believe God is God and His word is true? May we truly expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.

Let's pray.

Dear God, do we be so bold to say, as a church, we'd love to send a missionary out to every country? I don't even know how many countries there are, but I know there are a lot. Lord, would you not save souls every week that we meet together? Would you not sanctify Your people each week that we gather? Would You not build up our faith in You? Strengthen us, we who have such little faith and weak faith. We cry out, "Dear Lord, we do believe. We know we believe. We believe but please help us in our unbelief." Strengthen our faith, Dear God, and do mighty and wonderful works among us. Works that glorify Your name. Works that You get glory from and not ourselves. This we pray in Your Son's name, Amen.