

The Weapons of our Warfare (Part 2)

Text: Ephesians 6:16-17

Introduction:

1. In this section we have a piece-by-piece description of the armour we have been provided for the battle. God has given us 7 powerful weapons to use in spiritual warfare so that we might stand for Him.
 - The Belt of Truth (Vs. 14a).
 - The Breastplate of Righteousness (Vs. 14b).
 - The Gospel Shoes (Vs. 15).
 - The Shield of Faith (Vs. 16)
 - The Helmet of Salvation (Vs. 17a).
 - The Sword of the Spirit (Vs. 17b).
 - The Weapon of All Prayer (Vs. 18-20)
2. Each piece of armour must be consciously applied – “put on” (Vs. 14); “take unto you” (Vs. 13).
3. In this sermon we will consider the next three pieces of weaponry in the list.

I. THE SHIELD OF FAITH (VS. 16)

Historical background: At the time there were two main shields used by the Roman soldier. One was a small shield strapped on the arm with leather straps for close hand combat to ward off the blows of the enemy. The other was a large, oblong (rectangular) shaped shield, 4 ft high by 2.5ft broad (Polybuis), curved on the inner side and designed to be held in front of the soldier and thus protect the whole body. The outer surface was covered first with canvas and then with calf skin. On the centre front there was an iron boss that would cause most stones and heavy arrows to glance off. The edges of the shield were designed to be able to interlock with fellow soldiers so as to form a defensive front line. This larger shield is what is in view.

A. The Priority of the Shield (Vs. 16a)

1. “above all” = indicates that this piece of weaponry is of particular importance. It speaks of the primacy of faith in the Christian soldier’s life.
2. The Christian life starts in faith and must continue in faith. It is a walk of faith from start to finish. Our faith needs to be continually growing – “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that **your faith growth exceedingly...**” (2 Thess. 1:3).
3. Heb. 11:6 “But **without faith it is impossible to please him**: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

B. The Principle of the Shield (Vs. 16b)

1. The Definition of Faith
 - a. “shield **of faith**” = faith is the principle of the shield. There are a lot of airy-fairy ideas about faith in our world so it is important to get a handle on what the word means in Scripture.

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- b. The word faith comes from the Greek word 'pistis'. It occurs 244 times in the New Testament and at its core means 'trust', 'confidence' and 'reliance.' It is translated 'assurance' in Acts 17:31 – "he hath given **assurance** unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
 - c. Faith is "primarily, firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing and is used in the N.T. always of faith in God or Christ, or things spiritual." This is distinct to human faith "which consists of an opinion held in good faith without necessary reference to its proof. The object of Abraham's faith was not God's promise (that was the occasion of its exercise); his faith rested on God Himself." (Vine's Expository Dictionary)
 - d. Consider some illustrations of faith in relation to our salvation to help us better understand what it means:
 - i. Faith is the hand that receives – John 1:12 "But as many as **received** him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that **believe** on his name." This verse makes it plain that believing involves more than just an acceptance of facts in my heart, as important as that aspect of believing is. To know the facts of what Christ has done for me in my mind is not enough. I must receive Christ into my heart.
 - ii. Faith is the eye that looks - John 3:14-15 "And **as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness**, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (Num. 21:8 – Look and live). Isaiah 45:22 "**Look unto me**, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else." Salvation comes by looking to Christ, and Christ alone. Not by looking to a church or a religious system, not by looking to a religious practice or ritual but by looking to Christ and Christ alone.
 - iii. Faith is the heart that rests – Acts 16:31 "And they said, **Believe on** the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Just as one trusts in a chair for support because it is trustworthy, so one trusts in God's gracious salvation because God is reliable and trustworthy. Illustration: When John Paton was translating the Bible for a South Seas Island tribe, he discovered that they had no word for trust or faith. One day a native who had been running hard came into the missionary's house, flopped himself in a large chair and said, "It's good to rest my whole weight on this chair." "That's it," said Paton. "I'll translate faith as 'resting one's whole weight on God.'"
2. The Direction of Faith
- a. Christian faith has an object. It is not faith in faith or faith in a feeling but faith directed towards God.
 - b. The power of the shield of faith is on account of the fact it represents faith in God Himself. Our faith is not in our own faith for protection. Remember, this whole section starts with the

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exhortation to “be strong **in the Lord**, and in the power of **his might**.”

- c. Repeatedly in the O.T., God is called our shield. For example:
 - i. Gen. 15:1 “After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy **shield**, and thy exceeding great reward.”
 - ii. Ps. 3:3 “But thou, O LORD, *art* a **shield** for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.”
 - iii. Ps. 84:11 “For the LORD God *is* a sun and **shield**: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”
- d. 1 John 5:4 “...and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

C. The Protection of the Shield (Vs. 16c)

1. The Completeness of the Protection – “**all** the fiery darts”
 - a. “ye shall be able” = there is personal responsibility to exercise faith in God. Faith equips us to meet the devil’s attacks.
 - b. “all the fiery darts” = every dart from the evil can be defeated with the shield of faith. “Faith is mightier than the mightiest assaults of the devil” (Maclaren)
 - c. Remember, Paul is not just addressing the individual but the whole church of Ephesus. An individual’s faith is powerful in combating the attacks against his life but locking our shields together as a church body is absolutely vital in combating the attacks that come against the church as a whole.
2. The Character of the Protection
 - a. ‘quench’ = to put out, extinguish. The ancient shield was covered with tough leather and metal plates which could deflect the darts. It was also a common practice to dip the shields in water before battle to help extinguish the flaming missiles.
 - b. ‘fiery darts’ = “In the N.T. times the tips of arrows would often be wrapped in pieces of cloth that had been soaked in pitch. The pitch burned fiercely, and on impact it would spatter burning bits for several feet, igniting anything flammable it touched.” (Macarthur) These arrows had the potential to not only pierce the enemy’s body but also to burn him and set things ablaze (e.g., the enemies’ clothing, camp or homes). They were probably one of the most formidable offensive weapons of Paul’s day. These darts are the temptations the devil hurls against us, the ‘wiles’ mentioned in Vs. 11.
 - c. Satan has multitudes of well-crafted arrows to fire at God’s people and he knows that in each of us, there is plenty of dry fuel for his arrows to get a fire blazing if he can get one past the shield of faith. The dynamite of the self-life is very explosive! You are a walking bomb, ready to explode anytime but for the grace of God. There are three main categories of temptation the devil uses – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Within each of those categories, he has a large supply of different arrows to use. I like to think of it as the devil having 3 quivers; one called the lust of the flesh,

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one the lust of the eyes and one the pride of life and within each of those quivers he has a large range of different arrows to fire at God's people. And remember, he has lots of archers around ready to help fire those arrows (Vs. 12)! To illustrate, there is:

- i. The Burning Arrow of Lustful thoughts. Many of these come to us through no fault of our own but some believers are careless enough to make themselves available for target practice with their approach to the world's media.
 - ii. The Burning Arrow of Bitterness.
 - iii. The Burning Arrow of Covetousness.
 - iv. The Burning Arrow of Doubt.
 - v. The Burning Arrow of Pride.
 - vi. The Burning Arrow of Division.
 - vii. The Burning Arrow of Anger.
 - viii. There are many others but remember, Satan has a dart with your name on it and if one doesn't work, he will try another one. We have a vicious, determined foe who will not relent in his attacks until we are safely home in heaven. The Christian life is a battle field and a war zone from start to finish.
 - ix. Maclaren: "There are things in us all to which the fiery darts do especially appeal: desires, appetites, passions; or – to use the word which refined people are so afraid of, although the Bible is not, 'lusts – which war against the soul,' and which need only a touch of fire to flare up like a tar-barrel, in thick foul smoke darkening the heavens. There are fiery darts that strike these animal natures of ours, and set them all aflame."
- d. Arrows fly **swiftly** and **suddenly** and that is how Satan attacks. That is why the shield of faith must be ready and in place as the attack tends to come when it is not expected. "Evil tempts us because it comes to us, for the most part, without any beat of drum or blast of trumpet to say that it is coming, and to put us upon our guard. The batteries that do most harm to the advancing force are masked until the word of command is given, and then there is a flash from every cannon's throat and a withering hail of shot that confounds by its unexpectedness as well as kills by its blow. The fiery darts that light up the infernal furnace in a man's heart, and that smite him all unawares and unsuspecting, these are the weapons that we have to fear most." (Maclaren)

II. THE SALVATION HELMET (VS. 17A)

A. The Area the Helmet Protects

1. "Some helmets were made of thick leather covered with metal plates and others of heavy molded or beaten metal. They usually had cheek pieces to protect the face. The helmet protected the soldier not only against the arrows but also against weapons such as the broadsword often wielded by cavalymen who would swing at

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the heads of enemy soldiers so split their skulls or decapitate them.”
(Macarthur)

2. The helmet protects the mind of the believer which tends to be the epicenter of the spiritual battle. How the devil loves to launch his darts into our minds!

B. The Assurance the Helmet Provides

1. It is the “helmet of **salvation**” and thus speaks of the assurance of our salvation. “With his head protected, the soldier feels safe in the midst of the battle. Likewise, the believers’ possession of salvation gives them confidence of safeness during the assaults of the devil.” (Hoehner) “That which enables the Christian to hold up his head with confidence and joy, is the fact that he is saved.” (Hodge)
2. Satan loves to make us doubt our salvation because it has a way of crippling you so that you are out of the fight. So long as you are entertaining burning doubts about your salvation, you will do little in the way of spiritual warfare.
3. The promises of God’s Word in relation to our salvation provide constant protection in the battle against the devil’s darts. There are many verses on the eternal security of the believer we could consider but since we are in Ephesians, let’s remind ourselves of the words of assurance it provides concerning our salvation:
 - a. Eph. 1:13-14 “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed with that holy Spirit of promise**, Which is the **earnest of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” The word ‘earnest’ means down payment, deposit, pledge.
 - b. Eph. 4:30 “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby **ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.**”
 - c. Remember, not only were we sealed by the Spirit of God, but we were chosen, predestinated to adoption, accepted in the beloved, redeemed and forgiven through his blood.

III. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT (VS. 17B)

The sword mentioned here was the Roman short sword. “The double-edged blade was two inches (5 centimeters) wide and two feet (60 centimeters) long and was admirably suitable as a cut-and-thrust weapon for close work. It was placed in a sheath attached to the girdle high on the right side of the body so it would be clear of his shield-bearing left arm and not become entangled with his legs.” (Hoehner) It was the kind of sword carried by the soldiers who came to arrest Jesus in the Garden (Matt. 26:47), wielded by Peter when he cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant (Vs. 51) and used to put James to death (Acts 12:2). There are two truths given concerning the Christian soldier’s sword:

A. It is a Supernatural Sword – “of the Spirit”

1. The Spirit Inspired the Word
 - a. This is why the Bible is so powerful. It is Divine in its origin.

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- b. 2 Tim. 3:16 “All scripture *is* given by **inspiration of God**, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”
 - c. 2 Pet. 1:21 “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were **moved by the Holy Ghost.**”
 - d. John Wesley: “The Bible must have been written by God or good men or bad men or good angels or bad angels. But bad men and bad angels would not write it because it condemns bad men and bad angels. And good men and good angels would not deceive by lying about its authority and claiming that God wrote it. And so the Bible must have been written as it claims to have been written – by God who by His Holy Spirit inspired men to record His words using the human instrument to communicate His truth.”
2. The Spirit Enlightens in the Word (John 16:13)
 3. The Spirit Enables to use the Word
 4. **Warning!** Watch out for the substitute swords that abound today. Stick with the tried and tested Sword, the KJV Bible.

B. It is a Sharp Sword – “which is the word of God”

Hebrews 4:12 says “the Word of God is quick (meaning alive), and powerful (meaning energy), and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God is sharp with penetrating power for the spiritual conflict we find ourselves in. It is...

1. Sharp for Offensive Maneuvers
 - a. The sword is an offensive weapon with which to go on attack. Napoleon once said, “the best form of defense is attack.”
 - b. Public preaching and personal soul-winning are examples of offensive uses of the Sword. The Sword of the Spirit is able to cut and pierce the hardest of hearts. It cuts through the lies of the devil in false religion and pagan philosophies (e.g., atheism, humanism etc...).
 - c. There is nothing more powerful in this world than the Word of God and the Gospel message it proclaims. Whenever you wield the sword of the Spirit, something happens!
2. Sharp for Defensive Maneuvers
 - a. In the context of this passage, the defensive use of the sword is what is primarily in view. It enables the believer to stand firm in the midst of Satanic warfare. We use the sword to strike down and parry the thrusts of the enemy against us.
 - b. Illustration: Christ’s use of the sword to defeat the 3-fold attack of Satan – “it is written”.
 - i. The Lust of the Flesh – “And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that **it be made bread**. And Jesus answered him, saying, **It is written**, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” (Lk. 4:3-4)

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- ii. The Lust of the Eyes – “And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.**” (Lk. 4:5-8)
 - iii. The Pride of Life – “And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, **It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.** And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.” (Lk. 4:9-13)
3. Challenge: A soldier needs to know his sword and be practiced and skilled in its use in order to be effective in the battle. Too many believers hardly know their sword! Too many believers have their hands too full of worldly trash to grasp the sword they have received.
 4. The Scottish pastor and writer Thomas Guthrie said, “The Bible is an armoury of heavenly weapons, a laboratory of infallible medicines, a mine of exhaustless wealth. It is a guidebook for every road, a chart for every sea, a medicine for every malady, a balm for every wound. Rob us of our Bible and our sky has lost its sun.”

Conclusion:

1. In a very real sense, the “whole armour of God” is a picture of Jesus Christ. Christ is the truth (John 14:6); He is our righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) and our peace (Eph. 2:14). His faithfulness makes our faith possible (Gal. 2:20); He is our salvation (Luke 2:30); He is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14) and He is the Mighty Intercessor (Hebrews 7:25). When you got saved you received the Christ of God and therefore you have every resource needed to make it in the spiritual warfare you find yourself in.
2. Are you saved? Have you put your faith in Christ and Christ alone for your salvation?
3. Christian, which piece of the armour are you neglecting in your life right now? Are you growing in your faith? Do you have assurance of salvation or are you plagued with doubts? How well do you know your sword?