

The Armor of God Pt 4 – The Shield of Faith

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Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

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Bible Text: Ephesians 6:10-18; Nehemiah 4
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the sixth chapter of Ephesians, Ephesians 6. We are continuing a series of messages, actually if you were like writing down what your title is, it's Nehemiah 4, Ephesians 6 are the texts because we were preaching through, working through the books of Ezra-Nehemiah when we saw that the Lord is calling his people in building the kingdom, in building, they're rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah 4, that's what God is doing with his people in that time and place and as they rebuild the walls of Jerusalem to restore worship to its rightful place, to stand for God's glory, what they find is they're under attack. Enemies of God rise up against them, threaten them with violence, threaten to attack them and to stop them doing the work and so we saw and we titled the series of messages there, "We Build, We Fight"; that to build the kingdom of God is to have to fight of necessity. It's not that we go looking for a fight, we just go to build God's kingdom and the enemy of our souls, the enemy of God comes against us to fight.

It was true in the Old Testament, it's true in the New Testament. We noted how Ephesians, the book of Ephesians is really talking about how, in a sense, Paul's calling the Ephesian Christians to build God's kingdom in this way to build one another up. They are as Paul says in Ephesians 2:19-22, that you are as a Christian, if you have been born again, you have become a part of a living temple. You are being built into a temple. You're a part of the building of God. 1 Peter 2 makes the same point, you each, Peter says, are as living stones, being built together for a spiritual house to offer up praises to God. 1 Corinthians 3:16 says you, this is one of those "you's" that is plural, you all are the temple of God. The body of Christ is the temple.

So we're building God's house when we're building other Christians, when we're building ourselves up in our most holy faith, when we are pursuing Christ-likeness, when we're trying to grow in our understanding of the things of God and our obedience to our Savior. When you're actively pursuing holiness, you are pursuing the same kind of separation that Ezra-Nehemiah is typifying for us as they are separated from the nations around them by the walls of Jerusalem. And we're called to do that but we're to understand that as we build ourselves up in our faith, as we build up other believers as we go and minister to them, as we speak to them about Christ, as we challenge one another and provoke one another to love and good deeds, to follow Christ, then we're building and if you build,

you have to be ready to fight. And so Paul, then, as I was saying, Ephesians says you're a part of this temple in Ephesians 2:19-22, and then chapter 4 he changes metaphors and he says you and I are called to build one another up, and here the metaphor is the body; that we're all to see our role to nourish and speak the truth in love so that the whole body grows up into the full measure of the stature of Christ.

So we're called to build one another up. So he unpacks that, that's chapter 2, chapter 4, then chapter 6 he says the passage we're gonna look at, "Be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might." Be ready to fight. If you build, you must fight. "We Fight, We Build," was the title of some of our messages some weeks back when we were in Nehemiah 4 and we saw that in Nehemiah 4 to build and to fight means to take up the trowel and the sword. The trowel, the implement of building the wall, used to administer the mortar to the wall, and then the sword used, the implement of warfare to defend and fight against the enemy. So you need the trowel and the sword and we saw that the same thing is really done in Ephesians 6 where he's talking about take up the whole armor of God. So build but as you build, take up the whole armor, and so this is why we're now in Ephesians 6 just to remind us. I like to remind myself of that because I believe we're in Nehemiah 4, what are we doing in Ephesians 6?

So anyway, thank you for indulging me by listening to that connecting explanation, but the challenge is, the reality is to be a Christian, to have really been born again into the family of God is to live in a state of spiritual warfare. There's no choice. And that to pursue the holiness that God has called us to is to really invite even more intense attacks, but we must. The glory of our Savior is at stake and truly the joy of the Christian life. To be holier, to be more and more holy, by God's grace, completely by his power, there's nothing in us that can produce it, but to become more and more like Jesus is to become more and more happy, truly happy. True happiness goes together with holiness and so as we pursue that, we know that we must fight.

So that's the mindset behind what we're dealing with here and we are now looking at how to put on this armor and today we come, the title of today's message is "The Armor of God, the Shield of Faith." We come to the fourth piece of the armor. Paul describes six pieces of the Roman armor here in our passage and we have looked at the previous three and today we come to the fourth, the shield of faith, in verse 16. So let's read Ephesians 6:10-18.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 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. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we bow before You and Your word and, Lord, we confess our great need of grace. Lord, we understand that You must grant ears to hear and eyes to see for in and of ourselves our eyes are blind, our hearts are dull, but by the power of what You've done in us through the Gospel, you have given us eyes to see and ears to hear and Your Spirit can tune our hearts even now and we ask You to do that. Lord, help us to understand what You have for us today. Help us to see the glory of who You are and the glory of Christ, that He might be our delight and that we might be more like Him, and we pray this in His name. Amen.

So the armor of God, the shield of faith, and our spiritual warfare is not against people. They're not our enemies. Flesh and blood, he makes clear, your struggle is not against flesh and blood. It's never the person, it's the spiritual entity behind the person that is binding that person and blinding them. But as we take up these various pieces of armor, we need to take up the whole armor of God. We're not to go with just part of the armor. The emphasis is great in the passage. Twice he says put on the full armor of God, verse 11, "Therefore," verse 13, "Therefore, take up the full armor of God." So we must take it all up and in verse 16 we come to the phrase "in addition to all, 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." I want us to consider this important piece of armor under three points this morning, three questions that we're going to ask that will help us to understand what God is calling us to do. Three questions.

The first point, the first question is: what is the shield of faith? That's our first point: what is the shield of faith? What is the Apostle Paul getting at here? Well, understand this, first of all, there are two sub points, actually there's three sub points here under this first point, question: what is the shield of faith? It will be an A, B, C. A. Let's talk about the practical benefits of the shield, the physical benefits of the shield in Roman armor. The word that Paul uses here for shield is there were a couple of different words he could've used that were available to him in the Greek language. This particular word speaks of one of the shields of the Roman infantry that was the larger shield, not the small shield. In Latin it's the word "scutum" which is the Latin word for the larger shield. The Greek word actually translated here is a word that the etymology of the word for shield means door. It comes from "door." So it's the idea of a shield as big as a door. It's a 4 ½ foot tall by 2 ½ foot wide rectangular, mostly rectangular shield and it's usually made with a cylindrical bend in it. So it's 4 feet tall or 4 ½ feet tall, 2 ½ feet wide, and it's made to kind of wrap around the soldier as he advances against the enemy. It's sheets of wood bound together with canvas and leather and then overlaid with metal so that it would weigh about 20-22 pounds.

The soldier carried this large shield and the purpose of the shield is really seen even in the text. I mean, the fact that he mentions that it will enable you to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, the reason the shield was so big was because part of first century warfare that was common has actually been common throughout all warfare when you read military history, is that when you had armies about to clash, you would often have the softening up of the defenses by an artillery barrage. You see this talking about World War I, World War II. Before they would attack from one set of trenches to the other in World War I, there would be an artillery barrage that would try to blow, soften the people up on the other side by just blowing holes in the lines and then they would attack. The same thing in World War II. Well, in the first century the artillery barrage would be this archers, you know, shooting flaming arrows, flaming missiles at the army that they're attacking, and so that the flaming arrows were intended to, you know, decimate the ranks of the enemy, confound them, confuse them, cause them to panic, and then now the attack is going to have more effect.

So the practical benefit of the shield was it gave you something to withstand an onslaught of, you know, hundreds or even thousands of arrows that are coming at an approaching army or at a defending army. I mean, if you've ever seen some of those in the movies where you see, you know, the armor is pulling back and you've got, you know, scores of armors that are just sending arrows up at an angle and then they're coming down upon the soldiers. That's what this was for and so they could lift their shield up at the angle to catch those arrows and to stop themselves from being killed even before the battle actually had come to hand-to-hand combat. So that was a practical benefit.

Puritan theologian William Gurnall says that he describes this shield as armor for the armor. The shield was armor for the armor. You've already put on three pieces of armor already according to what Paul's called us to do. He exhorted us, first, to put on the belt of truth. So the soldier has on his tunic and he girds himself with his belt so that he has full mobility and freedom to move freely to the battle line. He's put on the breastplate of righteousness. His vital organs are guarded by this metal covering. He's put on the shoes, he's shod his feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. He's put on those shoes that enable him to have, you know, significant mobility and stability. Remember the spiked shoes that he can move to where the battle is hot. But having those things, now he says in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith. The shield is the armor that protects all the other armor.

So that's the physical benefit of that. This was actually very important. I mentioned how Paul spent much of his life in the presence of Roman soldiers as they were guarding him as he was in prison, sometimes chained to a Roman soldier, and so he obviously had lots of time to study the intricacies of the Roman armor but the Romans were at the time of the first century were dealing with an enemy to the east of Israel, the Parthians who were especially adept at this mode of warfare. They were known for their ability with archers and even handheld spears that were coated with pitch so that, you know, the arrow would have a metal tip, they would dip it in pitch, light it, and then shoot it or throw it, and the Parthians were especially skilled at this battle tactic. So the Romans, that scutum, that

large shield was an essential piece of the armor and Paul says in the same way it's essential for them in the physical and natural realm, we must take up the shield that is faith. The shield of faith.

So, A was the practical benefit of the shield. B is the question: what is faith? It's important for us to define that again. What is faith and so that we can understand how faith shields us. What is faith? This is an important thing not to assume because the word "faith" is thrown around a lot in our culture, people talk a lot about faith. You'll hear people often say, "You just need to have faith." Now you'll hear sometimes people criticizing faith, atheists will sometimes make fun of faith but most people in our culture actually have a pretty positive view of faith but a lot of times what they're talking about is faith in faith. You need to have faith that faith is really good. But biblically faith is much different. Faith is defined by the object of the faith, not the faith itself. It's not faith itself that is so important. I mean, faith is essential but it's a conduit through which the object brings the blessing and the key thing is what your faith is in.

So we're not talking about faith in faith biblically and also we're not talking about a blind faith. Biblical faith is not blind faith. It's not a leap into the dark. You know, you just sort of hope and in your mind you imagine things and you just sort of believe that they are. That's kind of the faith that permeates too much of the world and sadly often the church. You kind of make it up as you go along and you decide what you want God to be and you just believe that he is and it's all gonna work out because you believe it. That's not biblical faith. That's just a myth. No, biblical faith is not a leap in the dark, biblical faith is related to light because biblical faith is rooted in truth. Biblical faith is not closing your eyes and jumping into the dark, biblical faith is opening your spiritual eyes and looking into the light and on the basis of what you see, trusting yourself to that truth. Eyes are wide open in biblical faith.

Now it's true that we walk by faith not by sight. There's a sense in which you can't see the natural realm, you can't see these things with your physical eyes but your spiritual eyes are wide open. You're dealing with reality not with some kind of pie in the sky dream. Biblical faith is rooted in reality and rooted in truth. Paul says in Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." It's hearing the word of God and hearing the word about Jesus as you hear that, as you learn propositional truth, it's rooted in truth and light and truths about Jesus Christ, who he is and what he has done. As you hear those things and you accept them as true and you trust yourself to Christ, that's faith.

So faith is rooted in truth. The object of faith is the all-important factor in faith. It's not just belief. If you believe in something that's not true, there's no value in that. There's nothing commendable about that. Sincerity when you're sincerely believing in a lie is not something commendable, it is something tragic. Your faith is only as good as the object of your faith and the biblical picture is our faith is in God, our faith is in Christ who is revealed to us perfectly in this book, this perfect word that is a sure foundation for a firm faith, a firm reliance, a firm trust in the Lord Jesus.

Faith has three components. Theologians have noted this, I think it's helpful to make this point, especially helpful today in light of our cultural background and experience. Faith consists of three things: it consists, first, of knowledge; secondly of assent, a-s-s-e-n-t; and thirdly, of trust. Knowledge plus assent plus trust, that's biblical faith. To believe biblically you have to have true knowledge of true facts about God and about Christ and what he's done. So you have to know the truth. You can't have faith if you don't know the truth. You have to know who this Jesus is you're believing in, the biblical Christ not just the name Jesus with a bunch of fluffy ideas about what you want Jesus to be. No, the Jesus that is revealed in the Scriptures. The true and only Christ.

So you must know the facts. Knowledge is a part of faith, but it's not just knowing it, you can know the truth and not accept it. There are many atheists who can explain the Gospel even and then they reject it. They don't believe it's true. So it's not just knowledge, it's knowledge plus assent. Assent is the fact that you agree that it's true. It's intellectual assent. I accept it as true. These facts, these propositions, I accept that they are true. I accept, for instance, that Jesus is the eternal Son of God; that he left the glory of heaven and became a man at a point in time in the womb of Mary; that he lived a perfect life; that he was tempted in every way yet without sin; that he died on the cross and as he died on the cross he was made himself an offering for sin, God imputed our sins to Christ and punished him as if he had lived our wretched lives and he meted out the full measure of his wrath against our wickedness in Christ. And when Jesus said, "It is finished," it was because he had finished and he had drunk the full cup of God's wrath against the sin of everyone who would ever believe, and he had absorbed it and experienced the full weight of God's wrath and it was done. And then when he died, that's why the temple, the curtain in the temple that separates the holy place from the most holy place was torn from top to bottom at the moment he died. There's now access into the throne of God. And then Sunday he is raised from the dead to show what has already happened, that God has made a way, that Jesus has been victorious. And so if you believe those propositions that Christ is now seated at the right hand of God, that he is a great Savior, that's assent. You know these things and you now accept them as true.

But that's not still yet not biblical faith. In fact, this is a very important point because in James, James says to the Christians to whom he's writing, the professing believers to whom he's writing, he's challenging them to demonstrate the reality of their faith and he says to them, "You believe that God is one? You know, you know the facts about God, that there's one God and you assent to that? You believe that God is one, the demons also believe and tremble." The demons assent to the truth. When you read through the Gospels, you'll see again and again how the demons are recognizing the person of Jesus. They'll speak out. "Son of the Most High, what do I have to do with You?" They recognize him. They assent that he is the Son of the Most High but, you see, they don't have the third element of faith. They have knowledge, they even have assent but they don't have trust and this is a key part of faith. To believe is not just to know the facts, it's not just to assent to the truthfulness of those facts, it is to trust yourself and place your firm reliance upon those facts and in reality not just upon the facts, it is to trust and to trust yourself to the person of Christ. It is to believe into Christ, as it were, to unite

yourself to Jesus by faith, to receive him as your Master. It is a personal transaction of trusting yourself to him and casting yourself upon him and resting in him.

So it's those three elements. It's knowledge, assent, and it's trust, so then faith is the shield. It is the shield of faith. We need a shield in the same way that the Roman soldiers needed a shield. We also need a shield and the shield is faith. Now so that's what is faith. How now this is 1C, that was 1B, what is faith, 1C is: how does faith shield us? We're talking about what is the shield of faith? How does faith shield us? I think in Paul's mind he has a passage of Scripture in mind way back in the first book of the Bible, Genesis 15. Turn with me to Genesis 15. We noted how most of the armor, these six pieces of armor, five of them you find in the book of Isaiah, but one piece of armor you don't find in Isaiah but you find it in Genesis 15 and a couple other places, actually, but Genesis 15 I think is the foundational idea behind Paul making this shield of faith, this imagery.

So we're asking the question how does faith shield us? What is the shield of faith, how does faith shield us? Genesis 15:1-6, "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.'" I'm gonna stop there for a moment. Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great. The word of the LORD came to Abram. That formula, "The word of the LORD came," is a very important biblical formula that you will find again and again as you read the Scriptures and it usually introduces a prophetic revelation. "The word of the LORD came to Isaiah. The word of the LORD came to Jonah. The word of the LORD came to," and name the prophet, and then the prophet then says, "Thus says the LORD," and he's proclaiming the message. What's interesting is that phrase only occurs twice in Genesis. I think it's only twice in the Pentateuch, actually, the first five books of the Bible. It only occurs twice, it occurs in Genesis 15 twice, once in verse 1, once in verse 4. I think it's really important because I think the Lord is basically underlining and circling and highlighting this passage, its supreme importance in the revelation of God's plan of salvation. He says in verse 1, "the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying." Verse 4, "Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying." Abram is our prophet here. He's teaching us about God and the way of salvation.

So and basically, essentially the reason that's the case is because this passage teaches us that justification, the way that sinners are made right with God is by faith alone. That's here in the first book of the Bible. Paul when he's arguing for that in Romans expounding the Gospel, he goes back and he says, "What did Abraham our forefather have to say about this debate about how we're made right with God?" And he quotes Genesis 15:6. Abram believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. So this passage is of foundational importance in all of Scripture but one of the beautiful things we see here is not just that salvation comes by faith but that what the benefit of faith is to the believer. The benefit of faith to the believer is that when you exercise faith, God is your shield. The Lord himself is our shield.

"'I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.' Abram said, 'O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my

heir." Now I want you to see something here. It's interesting the Lord's first words to Abram were what? It's not, "Good morning, Abram. How are you?" Do not fear. Abraham, I mean, this is Abram, he turns to Abraham, it's always hard to remind myself to do that, he becomes Abraham in Genesis 17 so at this point he's Abram.

So Abram is afraid apparently. The Lord doesn't waste words. "Do not fear. Don't be afraid." What's he afraid about? Well, I think it's probably a little bit of both things, the chapter before Abram had fought a war against the kings of the east to deliver his nephew Lot who had been taken captive by the kings of the east and he wins a great victory. But fresh off that war, that battle, I mean, it was really just a battle, it wasn't a long war, but an intense battle and a victory, God then meets with him and says this, "Do not be afraid." Part of it, I think, was that, you know, look, this is not going so well. I mean, think about it. God told me I'm gonna have the land of Canaan, he's going to make me a great nation. Years are going by and all I'm doing is fighting for my life. He's tempted to doubt the promises of God and so the Lord shows up and says, "Do not fear, Abram. I am a shield to you. Nothing can harm you. I'm a shield to you." In fact, if you read the story of chapter 14, he beat an army much more impressive than the little band of men he had. God mightily did a work for Abram to win the victory that he won. It really should have been obvious to him but the things that should be obvious to us aren't obvious to us, are they? Isn't it amazing how sometimes you're worrying, you're afraid and then suddenly the Lord breaks through and you understand the truth again and you think, "What was I thinking? Of course, this is so obvious." But it's not always obvious to us.

So Abram needed this word. "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you." Then it's interesting as you watch the dialog, what's he also thinking? He wasn't just thinking about being afraid of dying in battle, he was thinking about, I think, dying in battle childless because the promise was that he would be made a great nation and that his descendants would inhabit the land of Canaan, and so you find Abram asking three questions in the passage, the first is in verse 2, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? I don't have a child yet. You promised me a great nation and Sarai and I don't have any children, and you know, when we started I was 75, she was 65, and now some years have passed," we don't know exactly how long, we know it's less than 11 years because chapter 16 is gonna tell us he's 86, so it's somewhere, "It's been years and I don't have a child and this guy, this cousin of mine who lived in Damascus, he's now heir." And before the Lord can even answer, it says, "And Abram said." It adds that, "And Abram said." I think it's emphasizing that the text is wanting you to see, look, Abram is just piling on question after question because normally you'd expect him just to say, it would have just gone and he would have said, "Since You have given no offspring to me." But it interjects again, "And Abram said," so you get the feeling Abram said this, and before the Lord could answer even, Abram said this.

""Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."" Then the Lord promises, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." He takes him out, "Look at the stars of the heaven, count them if you're able to count them. So shall your descendants be." The promise of

God. "Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." He believed in the Lord. He believed in the faithfulness of God. He didn't just accept the proposition and assent to it, he entrusted himself to the Lord. He actually it says believed in the Lord, into God. He believed in the person and character of God and entrusted himself to him and, of course, because of that he believed the promise and this was credited to him as righteousness. At this moment Abram goes from being a sinner under the wrath of God to being declared righteous forever. He's saved by looking ahead to the promise of the Messiah that is hidden in that wonderful account. Through your descendants, through your seed.

Well, the Lord shows up and Abram is dealing with these challenges and God basically says, "Listen, Abram, in all of your fears I am your shield. Believe into Me. I am your shield." So faith, then how faith shields us is faith is the vehicle through which we connect to God and his protecting covering power. Our faith causes us to rest in him, to hide in him.

Let me show you a couple other places this path, this idea is mentioned. The first is Proverbs 30:5. The idea of faith and a shield and God being our shield. Proverbs 30:5, "Every word of God is tested," purified, refiner's fire. Every word of God is completely pure and it is proven genuine. That's the idea. Every word of God can be perfectly trusted as authentic and genuine and reliable. "He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him." He shields those who take refuge in him. That's the idea, the same idea that we saw in Genesis 15.

Turn to Psalm 18. The same, let me put this in context. This is David and Psalm 18 is actually one Psalm that is repeated in the Bible. Psalm 18 is also found in 2 Samuel 22, almost word for word the reproduction of David's Psalm is there in 2 Samuel. God said it twice in his word. Very important passage.

Well, it starts off with in verse 1, "I love You, O LORD, my strength." Look at how he describes God. Now this is written by David. If you look at the title and then the description of the Psalm before verse 1, "A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said." So it's after David has been delivered from a time of intense conflict, attack. "I love You, O LORD, my strength." Look how he describes God. This is the fact that God is our shield. "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." Look he's just layering term upon term to say this is who God is. This is who you run to. Then verse 30, skip on down to verse 30, "As for God, His way is blameless; The word of the LORD is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him."

So the idea that the shield of faith is the fact that faith is the vehicle through which we find God as our shield. God shields us from the onslaught, from this bombardment of fiery arrows. So that's the first point. What is the shield of faith? Secondly, the second main point: why do we need the shield of faith? Why do we need the shield of faith?

Well, first of all, let's look at the physical practical necessity. So A, 2A is the physical practical necessity of the shield. We've talked about this but let's just elaborate a little bit. First century warfare, one of the key tactics was to bombard your enemy with flaming arrows to soften them up, to kill and decimate the ranks, and to bring confusion. In fact, one of the things that it did, think about flaming arrows. I mean, it's bad enough to get shot with an arrow but to have a flaming arrow pierce your flesh catching you on fire. I mean, the pain of that even if it's a flesh wound in the arm but now your flesh is on fire.

So the intense pain that that can cause, and then the idea of confusion because one of the reasons they used flaming arrows too was the blinding effect of the smoke. You know, if they weren't extinguished by the shields and so they would try to treat the shields. The metal they had on the shields as well as they often would soak the shields in water to try to extinguish those flaming arrows so that the smoke would be put out because not only the fire but the smoke. Think about thousands of arrows flying at a Roman legion that is standing on the battlefield and the veil of smoke that suddenly clouds their vision. That's part of the purpose of this in the design of the Generals.

Then so it's pain, it causes confusion, and it causes panic. I mean, if you're on fire, if you see somebody that knows they're on fire, one of the things you can expect to see is panic. People panic when you're on fire and that's actually if there's ever a good time to panic, that is a good time to panic. I mean, it's not necessarily a good time because sometimes you can panic and make it worse, you start running around like, you know, the old saying your hair's on fire, people running around with their hair on fire. That would be terrible to have your hair on fire and be running, what you need to do is be on the ground with somebody covering you up to stop that fire so that they can limit the damage, right?

But the reason they would use it, pain, confusion and panic. It would lead to disorder among the ranks so that they had the inability to stand. It made it impossible for them to withstand the attack. That's why all this happens. So that's the physical necessity of the shield, then, is to protect you from the pain, from the confusion, and from the panic so that you can stand firm. That's the physical necessity. Now think about the spiritual necessity, how this really relates to us because hopefully we're not gonna have to experience people shooting flaming, literal flaming arrows at us, but the reality is if you are in Christ, you experience the spiritual reality of this on a regular basis and the really tough thing is you never know when it's gonna happen. Satan doesn't say, make an appointment, "Let's have an appointment today. I'm gonna launch some arrows at you at 2:15 PM." No, they come out of nowhere, unexpectedly.

So how does the enemy launch these attacks? What are you really talking about here? Back to our verse, chapter 6, verse 16, Ephesians 6:16, "taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." The enemy launches these attacks. These seem to be temptations. I think temptations that are lies. We know Satan is a liar. His methodology is to lie and so he shoots lies at us. There is some debate about whether or not, what access Satan has to the mind. I don't think that the Bible teaches that he can actually plant a thought directly in your mind. It doesn't say necessarily that he can't but so it's really, we don't really know for sure, but I think the

best inference of just reading the Bible is that he doesn't have that ability. He can't read your mind because he's not omniscient and we're talking not about Satan himself but many of his minions that work for him that would be dealing with us. In verse 12, the powers, the world forces of this darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness, so demons, demonic beings who seek to attack us and they're hurling things at us that do lodge in our minds, that do affect our thought life but it's not that they have direct access but they have a really well laid organization to get into your thinking.

You know, we talk about and this is an important thing to remember, the Bible pictures basically the warfare that we are fighting as Christians, that we are arrayed against a three faceted enemy. The enemy that comes against us are basically three parts: the world, the flesh and the devil. The devil himself is who's being talked about here but what we see is the devil works through the world and the flesh. He is the ruler of this world and when the Bible talks about the world as an enemy, the Bible uses that word with a variety of semantic range and meaning. Sometimes the world is just the gathering of all the people in the world where John 3:16, "For God so loved the world." That's all the people in the world. But at other times the word "world" means something much more sinister. When 1 John 2 says, "Do not love the world," hey, God loves the world. No, he's not talking about the world that way. "Do not love the world neither the things that are in the world," and when he goes on, you see it's the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. The value system of the culture around us, the habits of thought, the world basically is the habits of thought, the habits of affections and values, the things that the world treasures and values, the habits of choice and commitment, the things the world is committed to, the things that people in the world are committed to. That's the world. So the way the world thinks, what the world wants, what the world does, that's around us all the time and Satan himself is the ruler of this present world. So he's orchestrating the design of all that's happening around us.

We've seen in previous passages, in previous weeks we looked at John 8 where it says, Jesus said to them, "You are of your father the devil." He said that to Jews. If they were of their father the devil, certainly every single person that's ever been born other than Jesus was of their father the devil. You and I were born as children, in a sense, spiritual children of Satan. That's what Jesus said. And not only that, we were the slaves of Satan and the slaves of sin. So but Satan is the ruler of this world, he's the god of this age, 2 Corinthians 4:4, the ruler of this world, Jesus calls him that three times in John 12, John 14, John 16, John 12:31 the first time, the ruler of this world.

So he's the one that's orchestrating everything. He's guiding everything. He's why the world is as wicked as it is and you have that, you're bombarded by things from the world all the time. This is one of the ways he fires arrows at you but I think he's talking about particularly how that the shield of faith is to be taken up at certain times. It's interesting, it's "take up" is the verb. It changes actually in the last three pieces of armor. The first three pieces of armor that we've seen already are part of the full armor of God, gird your loins with truth. That's something you put on. You take the belt and you fasten it to yourself. You put on the breastplate of righteousness. You fasten the breastplate to yourself. So the verb is "put on" Having shod your feet, the idea is you tie, the word

"shod" means you tie your sandals to your feet. You see how you're fastening things in those first three pieces. They're a part of you, as it were.

So the soldier gets up in the morning, he puts on his shoes, he puts on his breastplate, he puts on his tunic and his belt. He doesn't put on his shield. When the battle alarm sounds, you take up three pieces of armor. You don't put them on, you take them up. You take up the shield, you take up the helmet, and you take up the sword. Do you see that? So the shield is something that comes when the battle alarm, when the trumpet sounds and the battle is happening, you take up your shield. And you can think about a Roman soldier actually, he might even have a shield in his hand but he takes it up when the alarm sounds that the arrows are coming, okay? That's the idea then.

So we're to take up our shield in that same way because what happens is Satan is the god of this age, he works through the world but he also works through the flesh. Back to the world, the flesh, and the devil for a moment here. The devil works through the world and he works through the flesh. The flesh is essentially for the believer is the unredeemed part of man. It is the sin nature. It is, in a sense you could say it is habits of thought, habits of affection and values, habits of choices and commitments that were sown in and established before you came to Christ but once you come to Christ because you still have an unredeemed body, you have a new heart if you're in Jesus, if you have believed the Gospel, you've been born again, all things are new in the innermost part of your being but you still have what Paul says in Romans 7, you have this in a body of death. Paul says, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Sin nature is still in the body and so these habits of thought, habits of affection, habits of action, have affected your brain, they've affected your flesh.

Now what's interesting is to think about when you were forming all those habits before you came to Christ, who was your master? Satan. John Calvin talks about this, I forgot to bring the quote with me, but he has a quote where he says that before we were saved, Satan is on the throne of our hearts in the center of our being and he reigns and rules over everything in us. So he's not only setting things up in the world system, he was, in a sense, he was like the computer programmer that was loading up, loading you up with all the software before you got saved. Now you have a new heart but you still have that messed up software, the virus is in there, and he knows how to push the buttons to get that going. He doesn't directly speak to your thoughts but he brings things that introduces things that push buttons that he knows because he's an astute observer, like the word "demon" actually means "intelligence" is the root idea of the word. They're way more intelligent than us. He's watched human nature for thousands of years. He knows what he's doing and so he knows how to use things from the world that are external to you and they're gonna work very well with the computer programming he left when he got kicked out.

And so what that will feel like then is a barrage and this happens. I had this happen this week and it doesn't happen that often, you know, but as I was preaching on this, it just hit me the Lord's letting me have this experience this week. And what it was, I mean, it was kind of a, it wasn't a real long-lasting one but this is how it works, okay? I mean, it works

a variety of ways. This is an example of how it can work. You have, you read a news story on your smartphone, you watch it on tv or on your computer screen, and the story that you read is one that causes, you know, especially today there's a lot of bad news as you turn on the news. Don't you almost like, "I don't want to even hear what's going on today," right, "because it's gonna be bad." And one of the things that I think is really challenging about today, living today versus in the past centuries and even past decades is that now the news cycle is 24/7. Man, when we were young, when I was young, you could watch the news at 6 o'clock, 7 o'clock and 11 o'clock in Atlanta. That was it. And you could get the news the next morning. Well, there was actually a time there was a morning paper and an afternoon paper. You only got one of them. So you could read the newspaper, think about this, this is your only access to what's going on in the world: 6 o'clock news, 7 o'clock news, 11 o'clock news, newspaper. So you only could process whatever the bad news was three or four times. Now every time you look at your phone, bing, reminder, look at this. And the way the media has gotten, they're so deceptive and it's partly and some of it's their ideology and I think a lot of it is evil, yes, but there's also just the sense of their profit motive. They deliberately use their headlines to make you want to read their story and they do it by inflating the bad news. They make it look a lot worse up front than often it is. If you read on down, you're like, "That's not what you said." But they are trying to get the hit, the click.

Well, so you have that. Now think about that. Okay, you're going through your day and hear some bad news and then you get a text from somebody and, oh, there's a problem, "Oh no, what's happened?" Then this goes wrong. And then you have a relationship issue that's going on and you have a conflict directly with somebody, maybe you're driving and somebody pulls out in front of you, or they yell at you, or they honk at you. You know, don't you hate getting unjust honks? And there are times where you get honked at and you're like, "Sorry. I messed up. You're right. You know, I don't normally do this." You're kind of thinking that in your mind, you know? But I did. But then there are times where you get honked at and you're like, "Are you honking at me? What did I do?" You want to get out and, "Hey, let's discuss this. I didn't do anything wrong. Actually I had the right of way. You're the one that was not supposed to be turning in. The yield sign was on your side." Well, you don't do that because if you do, you might get shot, right? But you feel that way.

Well, so little things like that happen and what's happening is your buttons are being pushed and who knows if that person may belong to the enemy and Satan just helps motivate him to jump on out there right in front of you, or to honk at you, or whatever. And so the buttons are being pushed and suddenly now with things happening you start having thoughts because these buttons are being pushed from the outside and now your inside stuff starts happening. The bent of your flesh starts going crazy and you start having thoughts like, "Oh no, this is terrible." You know, you may be thinking, "What are my kids gonna grow up, what's the world gonna be like that my kids are gonna grow up in? With my grandkids, there's no hope. You know, this is awful. This is terrible. Everybody's gonna die from the coronavirus." Maybe you're not going that far but, you know, you can feel like that, don't you? And so then whatever's really going on, there's a real issue that needs to be addressed, there's some real building that needs to be done, but

the arrows that have come have created pain and smoke and you are disoriented by the smoke, you're panicked, and you are not standing. You are good for nothing to the kingdom. That's what he's describing and Satan knows how to pull those off at times you least expect it, and at times where it would have made the most benefit to the kingdom. Often we don't even know it because we miss it completely. Maybe it was a witnessing opportunity that he totally derailed you from, he derailed me from. So he's saying, "Listen, you've got to in addition to all those other things, you've got to have your shield ready."

It's amazing, he is a brilliant enemy. He is an evil, malevolent genius. Someone has called him that. One of the commentators I read a couple of months ago, a malevolent genius, that's what Satan is. Malevolent, he's hateful. He's spiteful. He's destructive. There's nothing good about his desires. He only wants to, as Jesus said, to steal, to kill and to destroy. But he is a genius in how he does it and we're no match for him. That's why you must take up your shield of faith. The only one who can stand up to the onslaught of all of those flaming missiles is the Lord who will be a shield to you, who is your very great reward. Just like Abram. In fact, it's interesting, I think one of the places you see this happen, turn with me to Job 1 and you have an example of how the enemy works.

Job 1. It starts off telling us that Job was a man, verse 1, Job "was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys." He was a wealthy man. Well, what you find out is that Satan wants to tempt Job, remember, and Satan goes to God and says, "He only fears You because You're protecting everything he has. If You'll just remove the hedge of protection and let me get at his stuff, he'll curse You to Your face." And so God says, "Only don't touch him. All that he has is in your power." God pulls back the hedge. Shows the sovereignty of God and the mysterious purposes of God, but what you also see is the malevolent brilliance of Satan.

Look at this in verse 13. Look at what he does. Remember I'm talking about flaming arrows that are fired from the outside and look at the split second precision of the flaming arrows that are fired at Job. It is incredible what Satan does and the timing, the split second timing with which he does it. Verse 13, "Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said." So he knows his kids are eating together. He's not with them. He's at home. A messenger comes and says this, verse 14, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans attacked," a neighboring people group, "the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." Killed all the servants except one by design. Satan wants that one to take the message back.

Look what it says, look at the next words, verse 16, "While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.'" What? I've lost my oxen and donkeys. I've lost my sheep. Look at the next words, verse 17, "While he was

still speaking, another also came and said, 'The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.'" I've lost everything. I've lost my camels. I've lost everything that I had is gone. Look at verse 18, not quite yet, "While he was still speaking, another also came and said, 'Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.'" That was a barrage like no other barrage, wasn't it? That is the split second timing and the genius of the enemy of our souls. This is why Peter says, "Be vigilant. Your adversary is like a roaring lion who's seeking whom he may devour. He wants to devour you."

Turn back to Ephesians 6. One of the words that's interesting in verse 11, the schemes of the devil, same word occurs in chapter 4, verse 14. Schemes, it's a word which means, it's actually our English word "method" comes from it. It means "a well-ordered process," but the idea the way it's used in the New Testament, it's a well-ordered process carefully planned but it's deceitful and destructive. Satan is a genius and he knows how to work his schemes to bring you to the breaking point so that's why we need the shield of faith.

Third point. We've talked about what is the shield of faith; secondly, why do we need the shield of faith; thirdly, how do we take up the shield of faith? Take up the shield of faith. The alarm sounds, you realize that things are happening and you're feeling, this is when you know the alarm needs to sound, you're feeling your thoughts are now going wild. Think about the last time that happened to you. You couldn't get control of your thoughts, that's when you say, "I should have my shield up already. I've gotta get my shield up now."

There's essentially in one sentence I want to tell you what to do and I'm gonna give you three ways you can do it. This is how do we take up the shield of faith? There's one, in a sentence this is the answer. How do you take up the shield of faith? You stop listening to yourself and start speaking to yourself because what's happened is Satan's pushed the buttons, your flesh is going crazy, you're thinking of all the bad things, you're focused on the negative, and you've got to stop listening. You have to stop that train of dialog that's happening and I love what Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, I'm borrowing that from Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones who says in his book, "Spiritual Depression," our greatest problem, this is so profound, our greatest problem is we listen to ourselves when we should be talking to ourselves. So stop listening to yourself. Stop letting your thoughts tell you, "Oh, it's hopeless. Oh, it's terrible. There's no way out of this." Stop that and start speaking to yourself and in speaking to yourself what do you do? You speak the word of God. You speak the word of Christ. You tell yourself and remind yourself who God is because in doing that you're going to hide behind the shield that is the Lord. You're gonna remember who he is because it doesn't really matter all hell can be breaking loose around you but God is still God. He's not forgotten you.

And so what has to happen, we have to remember that. In fact, the three ways, that's in a sentence how do you take up the shield of faith? You stop listening to yourself, you start

talking to yourself, and what do you talk to yourself about? Three things. You tell yourself, first of all, to remember that God is present. Remember God's presence. One of the most wonderful refrains in Scripture and just look for this as you read the Bible but especially you'll see it in the Old Testament, it is the phrase "I will be with you." I will be with you. "Go to the land I will show you. I will be with you." Jacob asking the Lord to take care of him, he's all nervous as he leaves the Promised Land to head to Laban's area and the Lord says, "I will be with you." When Joseph was taken into captivity in Egypt, sold as a slave by his brothers, remember, and he's taken as a slave, one of the most precious things that you will find in the story of Joseph is the phrase, "And the Lord was with him." When he's sold, after he's a slave and he's doing well and then he's taken into the dungeon because he's falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, unjustly accused, this is an injustice and yet he's now in jail because of that but it says, "And the Lord was with him." In Exodus when God calls Moses. Moses says, "Who am I that I should go? I have a speech impediment. I'm not a person that should go." "I will be with you." Joshua when Moses has died and God calls Joshua and he says, "You are going to now lead the people and I will be with you." Jesus as he gets ready to leave the earth and to ascend to heaven, what does he say? "All authority has been given to Me on heaven and earth. Go, preach the gospel. Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I command and," what? "And lo, I will be with you to the end of the age." Immanuel means "God with us." Hebrews 13:5, "No, I will never leave you nor forsake you."

So in the moment when things are going crazy, remember God's presence. Tell yourself, "The Lord is with me. He's promised He's with me. He's not forgotten me." So remember God's presence. Secondly, trust God's character. He's with me and trust his character. He's good. He's wise. He's sovereign and he's good. He knows the best way to do everything he does. He's good. He wants the very best things. He always wants the best things and he is completely in control. Remember his character.

So you remember his presence, trust his character. Psalm 34:8 says, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are saved." It's the same idea, isn't it? The name of the Lord. The name of the Lord doesn't mean a magical name, just to say Yahweh or to say Jesus. No, it means the character of God. The name of the Lord is another way of saying who he is and what he's like. When you think about who he is and what he's like, that is a strong tower of safety. Run into it.

So things are going crazy in your life, what you do is remember, "Oh, hey, wait a minute, the Lord is here. It doesn't feel like He's here but He's here and He's sovereign and He's wise and He's good, so therefore I don't need to panic." Trust his character. "The Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious. He's with me and He's compassionate. He's merciful. Jesus is a High Priest who is with me and who can sympathize with me in my weakness. He suffered exactly the same way I'm suffering and worse." No matter what you experience, Jesus has experienced the same thing only to a worse degree. I mean, the same spiritual, whatever the spiritual challenge you have, he has been more mistreated than you have and he can come to your aid. He's ready. He's there. He's your shield.

So trust his character and then, lastly, understand his ways. Understand this is the way that God works. He's allowing Satan to hit me with this barrage so that I have to pick up my shield and I have to come again to understand in a deeper way than I've ever known before that the Lord is a shield, that he is a rock, that he is a refuge, that he is my fortress. I know it now more than ever before and so I delight in him and I cling to him and I love him, and then even as that's happening I know, "Thank You, Lord, that You're even doing this, that You love me enough to let all hell break loose in my life so that I will come to see the sufficiency and the beauty of Jesus Christ in a deeper way. Thank You for loving me like that." It's the way he's always worked. Think about that's exactly what happened to Job. That happens and what does Job do? He picks up his shield. Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom. While he was still speaking. While he was still speaking. While he was still speaking. And Job picks up his shield, he says, "Naked came I from my mother's womb and naked I shall return. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. The Lord is sovereign, the Lord is good, I deserve nothing better." He's looking at God and he stands up and he picks up his shield and he withstands that.

In chapter 2 he goes through it again even worse and he says, "Shall we accept good from the hand of the Lord and not also accept evil?" And remember his wife, on the inside he's got someone hurling a dart at him, his own wife hurling that dart. Satan, that's one I've heard a preacher say, "He took all of his kids but he knew the one he needed to leave was his wife." I'm not saying that about spouses. That's not a general statement, that's about that one particular woman because God says when a man finds a wife he finds a precious thing. That's usually true but it wasn't so much true for Job. And she says that and he says, "Shall we accept good from the hand of the Lord and not evil?" He knows the Lord's sovereign and he's resting and then now he's gonna spend the next 35 chapters struggling because his friends come and they start telling him stuff and they're not such good counselors, but then the Lord shows up and the Lord basically, what happens, the Lord shows him who he is in a whole new way and Job says, "I had heard about You," now Job was a godly man before this all happens, we're told that in the very beginning of the book, it's clear he is a man and God says twice, "There's nobody like Job on the face of the earth." He says that to Satan. Job was already, man, he was the height of righteousness as a sinner can be by grace, but he says at the end of the book, "Before I had heard about You with my ears, now I have seen You with my eyes." Job says, "Now You're my shield. Now You're my treasure," and I'm confident you could ask him and he would say, "I would not change a thing. God is good. His ways are perfect. He is a refuge and a fortress. He is my shield."

So when we find ourselves, when you find yourself thinking and doesn't it feel like sometimes one thought comes and while that thought is still speaking, another thought comes, and while that thought is still speaking, another thought comes, and you feel yourself moving toward despair, moving toward just being controlled by fear, anxiety, discouragement, those things are crowding in upon you, what do you do? Run. Pick up your shield and lift it up. God is faithful. He is with you. His presence, he's right there. His character has not changed. He's the same yesterday, today and forever, and his ways, his ways are not our ways, his ways are better than we could ever imagine. He's doing something good.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the Gospel and for the promises that You've given us in Jesus Christ. We're thankful that You are the Gospel, that You are the best news, Lord. To know what You are like, You're worthy of everything that we have, everything that we could, I mean, everything that we desire is nothing in comparison with You. You, Lord, are supremely worthy. Help us to not be overwhelmed by the attacks of the enemy. Help us to be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. Help us take up our shield. Help us cling to our Savior. And Father, for those that are here who do not yet know Jesus in a saving way, grant them repentance, grant them faith, help them cling to Christ now, help them cry out to Jesus right now to place their trust in Him and to come to understand that He is the truest friend, the most loving Lord. He is the living God. Lord, be glorified in our hearts. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.