

## The shield of faith

Roman soldiers used large rectangular shields made of wood and covered in leather. Before battle, they would soak them in water to extinguish the flaming arrows shot by enemies. Besides being used for personal protection in battle, they had a formation called the tortoise formation where they interlocked their shields in the front and on the sides and the soldiers in the middle would hold their shields over their heads protecting them from arrows and spears flying from above. Thus, their shields were used for corporate protection of the soldiers as they moved together. Hence, a soldier's shield would protect him from the arrows of the enemy; however, he would still be vulnerable on his own and he would have greater protection when moving in sync with the rest of the troops. We are protected from the evil one by the shield of faith, but we have even more protection when we move in sync with the body of Christ – men and women of faith

Ephesians 6:10-17

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

### 1) The devil's schemes

- We need to understand the schemes of the devil if we are going to not only withstand him, but overcome him.
  - 2 Corinthians 2:11 ...in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.
  - Notice that *schemes* is plural, which means that he uses a variety of different schemes to destroy Christians
- Christians aren't the devil's ultimate target – God is
  - God is infinitely greater than Satan, or the devil, and thus the devil can never harm God in any way in a direct conflict. In fact, he has already tried and been overthrown by God.
  - Isaiah 14:12-15 How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!  
You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."  
But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit.
- If Satan can't overthrow God directly, he attacks what's precious to God – His glory, His works, and His people
  - He makes every effort to bring the name of God into disrepute or to just hinder God from getting any glory at all
- Satan is a master of deception and even tries to deceive believers that he exists
  - Revelation 12:9 The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.
  - 2 Corinthians 11:14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.
  - The context of this is people being false apostles and deceitful workers
  - This scheme of the devil is rampant today, and as there are many false teachers and prophets today, besides politicians using the name of Jesus for their own gain
- Satan is the father of all lies and uses lies to destroy God's people
  - John 8:44 You belong to father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
  - Lies and deception are inseparable as deception is based on lies
  - The serpent deceived Eve by twisting God's Word thus bringing destruction on mankind
  - Wars are often started on lies and deception, along with unjust accusations

- Destructive lies that people believe today
  - You're not good enough and never will be
  - To an effeminate boy: you're really a girl ; to a masculine girl: you're really a boy
  - An abused spouse believes that it's their fault
  - War is the best way to deal with international conflict
  - You've been hurt and need to take revenge
- The devil is also called the accuser
  - Revelation 12:10 For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.
  - Even accusations are based on lies and sometimes they're merely half truths
  - Jesus didn't die for you. You're not good enough
  - You need to do penance for your sins even if you believe in Jesus
  - You should feel guilty and shame for your past, even as a believer
- These are all arrows that the devil constantly shoots at us

## 2) The shield of faith

- Ephesians 6:16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
- The shield of faith goes beyond stopping the fiery arrows of the devil, it extinguishes them. It causes their effects to die
- The shield of faith cannot work alone. It has to work along with the belt of truth as the arrows of lies have to be fought with truth
- In a court of law, both sides present their cases, but the truth of evidence is what prevails.
- Faith does not and cannot stand on its own. Faith is an explicit trust in God and His Word – the truth that He has revealed to us
- How does the shield of faith work?
  - It counters the lies of the evil one with the truth of God
  - Why then are we talking about the shield of faith and not the belt of truth?
  - Truth always remains truth whether we believe it or not, but it only becomes effective in our lives when we believe it
- How to counter the devil's lies?
  - You are never good enough and never will be
    - I know that I'm not good enough, but the Word of God says that God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) and that I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." (Psalm 139:14)
  - You need to take revenge on those who hurt you
    - The truth is that violence begets violence but that forgiveness is a better way to set me free from my bitterness and resentment against others. For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14-15)
  - You need to feel guilty and shame for your past
    - Jesus has forgiven me of the guilt and shame of all my sins as He paid the price and took all the guilt and shame of them on Himself on the cross. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2) ; And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

## 3) The Lord is our shield

- Ultimately, it's not our faith that's our shield and protection from the evil one, but the Lord Himself is our shield, and our faith in Him and His Word is secondary
  - Psalms 18:2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
  - Psalms 18:30 As for God, his way is perfect: The LORD's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.