

Ephesians 6:10-13.

- We are on a mission – *"Be Strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might"* – The Ephesian letter has two halves. The first boasts of the amazing blessings and strength of Jesus, while the second challenges us to *"walk in a manner worthy..."* (Eph. 4:1). That means strength & resolve.
- Satan is unseen but active - "not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers..." This "not, but" construction notes that there will be flesh and blood decisions, but the real issue is the deceitful worker of death behind it, seeking to derail our faith and devour our souls.
- We need armor to survive – *"Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."* We cannot defeat Satan and keep our souls from his grip without this armor, ALL of it, every piece, as each is in itself unique.

Review: "Gird your Loins with Truth"

- 1) This is about the Word of God – *Read, Study, Obey* (Ex – Exodus 28-30 – yes, even there!)
- 2) This is about Fact over Fiction – *Acts 26:24-26* – "Truth and Rationality" - Measure yourself!
- 3) This is about Putting on Christ – *Is. 11:1-5* – He is full of grace and truth – emulate Him!

Review: "The Breastplate of Righteousness"

- 1) This is about the Word of God – It is about the Righteousness layered on us from the Word
 - a. His R. upon us – Grace / His R. in us – Faith / His R. through us – Good Works!
- 2) This is about Right and Wrong – *Ac. 10:35* – "do what is right" – boils down to daily choices.
- 3) This is about our Righteous King – *Is. 59:17* – He always chose God's way. Inspirational!

Review: "Shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace"

- 1) This is about the Word of God – It bridges Peace and Preparation – *Romans 1:16-17*
- 2) This is about Good over Evil – The good news. Hope and peace and purpose.
 - a. The Gospel equips you with joy and support – who would give that up? For the flesh?
- 3) This is about Active Evangelism – *Is. 52:6-10* – Announce Peace! Keep the waters flowing!

"The Shield of Faith" – (v.16) – This is terrific imagery, isn't it? Here is the devil, working in the unseen world, but firing very real arrows. Written on the side of them, coming from all directions, are words we know well:

"immorality" and "sensuality," "idolatry," "enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger," "drunkenness" and "carousing" – these and things like these. And they don't just hit and hurt:

They are flaming. They burn. They scar. They start fires. They consume. We must block them! Not just block them. Extinguish them. Have them fall, fire burned out, harmlessly before us. And we don't want our bodies to take all the blows. We are wearing armor and it helps. But we need to stop these before they strike at Truth, Righteousness and Peace's Preparation. Enter: SHIELD OF FAITH!

"Faith" is well worn territory in terms of preaching. The word is all over the New Testament and has been preached on a zillion times. So, I want to begin by challenging the accepted standard a bit:

1) This is about Belief in God

- a. Faith is not works. Faith is not baptism. Faith is not going to church. Faith is not good, godly decision making. Faith is not the doing of a thing. This is popular, but inaccurate.
- b. Faith is behind all those things. Faith is belief in the reality of God.
 - i. **Outline of Bible Usage on Slides** - #4102 – www.blueletterbible.org
 - ii. "Conviction. Belief. Persuasion. Constancy." – That's what faith is.
 - iii. **I Cor. 2:5** – belief in the power of God! **II Cor. 5:7** – Belief in the Unseen!
 - iv. **Romans 4:5, 16-22** – What was at Abraham's core? BELIEF IN GOD!
- c. Now, will this produce works? True faith will. Will those work prove the faith: yes.
 - i. **I Cor. 16:13** – Firm in IT, acting like me and being strong.
 - ii. **Eph. 2:8-10** – After true belief, we fulfill our purpose: good works.
 - iii. **James 2:17-20** – True faith demands works, it proves itself by them.

- d. But they are not one in the same. The religious world and their “belief only” mantra has caused us to say: “well, faith, true faith, is obedience.” It is not. It is conviction to such a level, that obedience grows naturally from it, fueled by it.
- e. *Here's why this matters:* you ever know anyone who did many faithful things: baptized into Christ, goes to church, doesn't curse or do drugs, treats his family well ... and yet, he is pierced from every angle with the arrows of the devil, and doesn't know why he's failing? Maybe he's confused actions of faith with faith, and these actions carry on out of habit or pretense or some measure of belief in God, but in his heart, at his core, CONVICTION and PERSUASION, a CONSTANCY of BELIEF in God and His promises are lacking. We call that doubt. It is an absence of faith, no matter the *good actions*.
- f. SO... we need faith. An unbelievably real sense that God is always in the room. An unwavering assurance in our hearts that the Word is real and Christ is coming.

2) This is Primary Defense

- a. You've heard the phrase: “fight fire with fire.” Fire is strong and potent and offensive, and if someone comes at you with fire, you go back with fire. In other words, combat offense with stronger offense. This can work, but it sounds like a lot of burned people.
- b. Better strategy: FIRST “*fight fire with water.*” Yeah, I know water isn't scary offensive and destructive, but it sure can put out a fire. Then pull out your fire.
- c. Well, fight the Devil with Righteousness and Truth – fight the Flesh with the Spirit.
 - i. **Galatians 5:16, 19-24** - Hit immorality with self control. Etc. This is a good strategy, a great offense in Christ will defeat the offense of Satan.
 - ii. But fighting arrows with breastplates can get tiring and very painful. Fighting sin with good choices works, but it can be hard and trying.
- d. UNLESS, we start with the shield, our first line of defense. We take these things out with FAITH, simple trusting FAITH, then proceed with the fruit of the Spirit!
 - i. **Galatians 2:20** – Faith in the Son, His Love, His Sacrifice.
 - ii. **5:5** – This true expectation of heaven, hope, direction.
 - iii. Using this, we stop the arrows. Then we march forward on the offense.
- e. *I just think the answer for stopping Satan isn't first and foremost: DO MORE THING. More church. More fellowship. More self-control. Of course those things matter. Of course we need them. But they only work when they FIRST and FOREMOST come OF FAITH!*
- f. So, spend time building your Trust in God, eradicating all Doubts, seeing God in the Room, knowing Christ is coming back. Acknowledging the Spiritual. Your Shield!

3) This is about the Word of God

- a. Yes, we are right back where every lesson has led us – READ, STUDY and APPLY the Holy Scripture on a daily basis! Our daily diet of God's Word will fill us with Faith!
- b. **Romans 10:13-17** – We know the one verse but there is lots of rich stuff here!
 - i. Calling on the name of the Lord is belief/faith terminology. He is here.
 - ii. But we need to hear the Truth to learn to do so. So, prophets preached!
 - iii. Israel had it in front of them but didn't believe it.
 - iv. But we know, if we take it in and love and learn it – FAITH COMES!
- c. **Acts 2:21, 22-36** – He told them to DO nothing... but BELIEVE! As a result of true faith, absolute trust in Christ, they practically begged to DO what God wanted!
- d. And maybe our angle tonight will help reluctant daily Bible readers. “I know what I need to do, so reading the New Testament again won't help.” Faith is not the doing, it is what is behind the doing.

Conclusion: Are the arrows hitting your armor and it hurts. Are they flying through unabated? That's a hard way to live the Christian life. Hold the Shield of Faith! Belief and Conviction. God's Presence, God's Promises, the reality of God and His Glory. The arrows can penetrate you, but not HIM!