

Shield, Helmet, Sword Ephesians 6:16-17 (ESV) bible-sermons.org May 20, 2012

We've been on this subject of spiritual warfare for a few weeks now. There is a lot of teaching in the church about this topic. Much of it is simply unbiblical. We can't order God around as if He was our servant. (Psalm 100:2) That is turning the relationship upside down. We are His servants, and when we yield to Him we become His instruments for His use. (Romans 6:18) That is a privilege and an honor none of us deserves. It is only through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ that we could ever walk in such a high and holy calling. We take orders from the Captain of the Hosts of heaven, Jesus. (Joshua 5:14) When we get our marching orders, we can pray in faith and expect to see the results because we are praying with the authority of our Commander, in other words, in the name of Jesus. (John 14:13-14)

We can't take verses out of context and apply them to a situation just because we want to see something happen or think we know what needs to be done. If the Spirit of God applies a portion of Scripture to a given situation, then you can pray in faith. Just be sure it is God's Spirit and not your own. In this complex world of spiritual warfare, we can't always look to what seems to be best or reasonable. Only God knows all the details. Only He knows what the future will be.

We have to accept the fact that we are utterly dependent on Him and His wisdom or we will end up resisting Him like the Children of Israel. Many of the arguments they gave Moses in the wilderness were quite reasonable. Wouldn't you have thought that it was wrong for God to lead you and your children and flocks into the wilderness and not give you water? Wouldn't you have been tempted to demand that Moses provide water, now! And when the spies said there were giants in Canaan that could squash you and your children like bugs, wouldn't you have been tempted to complain with the rest of the people? (Numbers 13:33)

Let me bring it a little closer to home. Would you think dear Amanda at the age of 21 should die of a rare form of cancer known to only be in older men? Yet, in spite of all our prayers, the Lord called her home. ³⁴ *"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"* Romans 11:34 (ESV) ⁸ *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.* ⁹ *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.* Isaiah 55:8-9 (ESV) For reasons known only to God, He chose not to answer our prayers and intervene with a miraculous healing. He certainly could have, and we certainly did ask.

We are often faced with these situations in which our will and God's do not seem to line up. It is in those times when we must recognize that God is God and we are not. We

Commented [notes1]: Psalm 100:2 (ESV)
² Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

Commented [notes2]: Romans 6:18 (ESV)
¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

Commented [notes3]: Joshua 5:14 (ESV)
¹⁴ And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"

Commented [notes4]: John 14:13-14 (ESV)
¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

Commented [notes5]: Numbers 13:33 (ESV)
³³ And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.

can't see the future, and we don't know all the factors. When we recognize who we are and who God is, then we see the need to trust Him. I'm not saying that we shouldn't pray and ask, but in the end, we must trust God to do what is right. (2Samuel 12:21-23)

As we mature in the Lord we can apply this verse from Paul's letter to the Corinthians. ¹⁶ *"For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.* 1Corinthians 2:16 (ESV) You will never teach the Lord anything or tell Him of something about which He is unaware. You will never comprehend His thoughts. But if you are in Christ and trusting Him, you can mature and accept the mind of Christ.

What is the mind of Christ? He is the greatest spiritual soldier to ever walk the earth in human form, so how did He think? What is His example? (Exodus 15:3) What should our attitude be in these difficult and trying circumstances we face in a fallen world? Jesus said, ³⁸ *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.* John 6:38 (ESV) and ¹⁹... *"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.* John 5:19 (ESV) If Jesus was not here to have His way and do His will, and only did what He saw the Father doing, then to have His mind is to always look to the Father for direction. This is the way to fight this spiritual war! Depend on God! (Psalm 84:5) Remember how the passage began! ¹⁰ *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.* Ephesians 6:10 (ESV) We are to be in Him. Soldiers don't run around doing what they think best. They have orders. If they disobey the orders they can be court-martialed. Thank God our Commander is gracious! Amen? As we conclude the armor with the final three pieces, remember that these are not to run out and do what you think best, but to be equipped to obey our Commander.

¹⁶ *In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;* The verse begins with a vague expression that can be translated a number of ways, "In all this" or "In addition to all these" or as we have here in the ESV, "In all circumstances". I'll say again that when you find this kind of multiple possibilities, you can usually apply them all. In addition to the first three pieces of armor, and in every circumstance, take up the shield of faith.

The shield mentioned here was a tall slightly rounded oval or door shaped shield that was used to protect the entire body from a wave of arrows. You've probably seen movies with ancient battles where waves of arrows would be flying into the ranks of soldiers. Those arrows were often tipped with tar or sap and lit on fire before they were shot into the sky. There was a metal plate or wet leather over the shield so that it would not catch fire.

Commented [notes6]: 2 Samuel 12:21-23 (ESV)

²¹ Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food."

²² He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?'"

²³ But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

Commented [notes7]: Exodus 15:3 (ESV)

³ The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name.

Commented [notes8]: Psalm 84:5 (ESV)

⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

Paul tells us that our shield is faith. **It takes faith to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.** Let's look at what this is telling us. The evil one, Satan, is shooting at us with the intent to do us serious harm. His deadly arrows are tipped with tar and lit on fire so that we become seriously wounded if they hit their mark. Remember we are assaulting the gates of hell. The enemy is shooting at us from the ramparts on the wall. (2Samuel 11:20)

What are his arrows? They are lies, lies of accusation, doubt, and discouragement. (Psalm 64:2-4) They are meant to get you to turn your eyes from the Word of God and from your trust in Him. They are meant to instill fear into your heart and cause you to retreat. They often come from lips of people that don't know the Lord and don't realize they are taking their marching orders from Satan. (Psalm 139:20) Sometimes they even come from the saints who are not walking in the Spirit. (Galatians 2:4)

Paul told us the devil has schemes. Part of the scheme of these arrows is to get your eyes off of Jesus and onto self, off of blessings and onto desires. (Hebrews 12:2) Whenever you don't understand a situation, which is most of the time, he'll try to twist the true meaning and intent of God. He loves to distort the character of God and get you to doubt God's love and faithfulness. He's pretty good at it because he's had thousands of years of practice, from the Garden of Eden to this very day. The minute he captures our thought life is the moment the tide of battle turns in his favor. The burning tar of lies begins to sear our thoughts and get us to look to self instead of looking to God. We can smother it quickly or let it burn. The longer we let it burn, the greater the damage. The results can be a compromised life of sin, an ineffective witness, backsliding, depression, divorce, even physical death. **This spiritual war has physical repercussions.**

So what are we to do? Stay behind the shield of faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God! Remember that God told Abraham the He would be a shield to him. (Genesis 15:1) In Psalm 64, the psalmist speaks of the arrows of bitter words from the wicked, but in the last verse he declares that the Lord is the refuge for the righteous. (Psalm 64:10) He is our place of escape from the enemy's attack. He is also called our strong tower. (Psalm 18:10) Our faith is in who He is, the God of steadfast love. That is the faith we need to protect us from those flaming arrows.

The Word declares that His love never fails (Leviticus 3:22); so when the enemy tries to get you to doubt God's love, remember that promise. Have faith in the promises of God, in the revelation of God's character in the Word. Remember His faithfulness to you in the past. **Counter Satan's words of doubt with faith in the eternal Word of God.** (Psalm 119:89) Faith in the Word extinguishes the flames on those arrows.

Commented [notes9]: 2 Samuel 11:20 (NIV)

²⁰ the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall?'

Commented [notes10]: Psalm 64:2-4 (ESV)

² Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the throng of evildoers,
³ who whet their tongues like swords, who aim bitter words like arrows,
⁴ shooting from ambush at the blameless, shooting at him suddenly and without fear.

Commented [notes11]: Psalm 139:20 (ESV)

²⁰ They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain!

Commented [notes12]: Galatians 2:4 (NIV)

⁴ [This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

Commented [notes13]: Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Commented [notes14]: Genesis 15:1 (ESV)

¹ After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

Commented [notes15]: Psalm 64:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Let the righteous one rejoice in the LORD and take refuge in him! Let all the upright in heart exult!

Commented [notes16]: Proverbs 18:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

Commented [notes17]: Lamentations 3:22 (ESV)

²² The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;

Commented [notes18]: Psalm 119:89 (ESV)

⁸⁹ Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

Keep that shield up at all times. We can't relax our faith in the Word. We can't get complacent. Jesus warned the church in Sardis to wake up. (Revelation 3:2-3) We can get complacent about grace and nod off, forgetting that we are in a war and arrows are coming our way. Diligence and self-discipline are necessities of life in Christ. (1 Peter 1:13)

Commented [notes19]: Revelation 3:2-3 (ESV)

² Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.
³ Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, I don't think it is coincidence that the Spirit had the shield of faith followed by the helmet of salvation. Isaiah 59:17 Though the Greek culture may have not understood that our thought life goes on in the head, the Spirit knew this. We need faith to block those arrows of doubt, but we also need our mind covered with salvation. We need the mind of Christ. We need to have our minds renewed by the Word of God. (Romans 12:2) If those arrows should get through, we quickly deal with them because our mind has been renewed. Salvation has set it free from sinful, selfish patterns. (Romans 6:12)

Commented [notes20]: 1 Peter 1:13 (ESV)

¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Commented [notes21]: Isaiah 59:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.

Most of the battles take place in our mind. Our attitude toward things is either that of Christ or that of the flesh. We are either godly or selfish. When our mindset is self-focused, all the fruits of the flesh follow. (Galatians 5:19-21) When our mind is renewed by the Word, we are seeking to please God and serve others. The fruits of the Spirit become evident. (Galatians 5:22-24)

Commented [notes22]: Romans 12:2 (ESV)

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Commented [notes23]: Romans 6:12 (ESV)

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

The helmet of salvation covers the mind, our most vulnerable member. Know you are a redeemed child of God, adopted into God's family, destined for eternity with Him, gifted by the Spirit to serve, anointed to do His will, and the flaming arrows will bounce off your armor. Forget who you are in Christ and the flesh will let those arrows burn scars into your soul. Take the helmet of salvation!

Commented [notes24]: Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV)

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,
²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,
²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Commented [notes25]: Galatians 5:22-24 (ESV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Though the Roman shield could be used to punch, the sword was the main offensive weapon. It is the Word of God. We read of Jesus using it in that battle in the wilderness after 40 days of fasting. Every time Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus responded with the Word of God. (Luke 4:4) Jesus was showing us how to resist the enemy. When you resist Him with the Word, he has to flee. (James 4:7) The Word is truth. He can try to distort it and misuse it, but when you know the Word, you won't let him get away with it.

Commented [notes26]: Luke 4:3-4 (ESV)

³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."
⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

Commented [notes27]: James 4:7 (ESV)

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

I can't emphasize enough how important it is to know and understand the Word. (Deuteronomy 32:46-47) That is what we emphasize. It is the Word that judges whether or not something is truly of the Spirit. How do you know if someone's prophetic word is from God or their own spirit? It's by the Word of God! How do you know if what is in your heart is from the flesh, the devil, or the Spirit? It's by the Word of God! How do you know God's will in a given situation when you haven't received a word from the Lord? It's by His written Word! (Isaiah 8:20)

Commented [notes28]: Deuteronomy 32:46-47 (ESV)

⁴⁶ he said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law.
⁴⁷ For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."

Commented [notes29]: Isaiah 8:20 (ESV)

²⁰ To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV) The Apostles had huge portions of the Old Testament memorized. They sang the psalms. They discussed the prophets. What they wrote was almost always directly related to the Words of Scripture they had hidden in their heart.

If you don't know the Word, you aren't going to be able to put up much of a fight. You will always be on the defensive. If you are wondering why the Lord doesn't use you more in battle, it may be because you have a little pocket knife instead of sword. That can be dangerous.

We have one brother memorizing the book of Romans. Another is working on Ephesians. It takes a passion for the Word and self-discipline. Don't be slothful, get at it. No matter what age you are, you can memorize and meditate on the Word of God. If you can only memorize one verse and it takes you all year – do it. Put it on a 3x5 card or two or three and carry it with you.

Practice with your sword. When soldiers weren't in battle, they'd practice their skills with wooden swords. Their life depended on it. See if you can't back your opinion with the Word. Listen to the response from the Word. Test it. Be open to it. It's double edged because it pierces our own heart in a good way and drives the enemy back, destroying his lies. (Hebrews 4:12)

Every one of these pieces of armor is the Lord Himself. The belt is truth. Jesus declared He is the truth. (John 14:6) The breastplate is righteousness. The Lord is our righteousness. (Jeremiah 23:6) The Gospel of peace is the Good News and that Good News is Jesus. (Acts 8:12) The shield we looked at today is faith. The psalmist declared the LORD was his shield. (Psalm 119:114) The helmet is salvation. The Lord is my light and my salvation. (Psalm 27:1) The sword of the Spirit is the Word and once again, Jesus is the Word manifest. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 13:14) He is our armor. He is our offensive weapon. Let us live in Him! When you are in Christ, no one can stand before you.

There are more than enough half-hearted pocket knife wielding sleepy believers in the body of Christ. These times call for soldiers that wield a Goliath sword like David. It takes a life of dedication with Jesus as Lord of all your life. Will you hear the call? Will you make the necessary sacrifices?

Paul declared that the Lord would rescue Him from every evil deed... (2 Timothy 4:18) When Rome took his head from off his shoulders the rest of the verse came to pass, *"and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom"*. You see, the safety we seek is not physical. (Luke 12:4) Our warfare is not over the physical. The physical is passing away.

Commented [notes30]: Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Commented [notes31]: John 14:6 (ESV)

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Commented [notes32]: Jeremiah 23:6 (ESV)

⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.' E

Commented [notes33]: Psalm 119:114 (ESV)

¹¹⁴ You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word.

Commented [notes34]: Psalm 27:1 (ESV)

¹ The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Commented [notes35]: Romans 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Commented [notes36]: 2 Timothy 4:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Commented [notes37]: Luke 12:4 (ESV)

⁴ "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

It is the eternal safety of our soul! This battle is more than physical life and death. It is about dedicating our life to the glory of God. And now the conclusion of that same verse, *"To him be glory forever and ever. Amen!"*

Questions

- 1 What is our relationship to God?
- 2 What is the mind of Christ?
- 3 What is the shield? Function?
- 4 What are the flaming arrows?
- 5 What is the danger for believers?
- 6 What is the helmet? Function?
- 7 How do we keep it on?
- 8 What is the sword? Function?
- 9 How do we know God's will?
- 10 What is all the armor?