

*“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” - Ephesians 6:16*

### **“The Shield of Faith”**

Ephesians 6:16

I. For Roman soldiers in battle, having the right shield could mean the difference between life and death. The same is true for professing Christians in the battle of spiritual warfare. There are many “shields,” - many types of faith:

1) Faith that God exists, which even demons have (James 2:19)

2) Faith in the truth of the Bible, which even Satan has (Matt. 4:6)

3) Faith in miracles, which even Judas Iscariot had (Matt. 10:1-4)

4) True saving faith which is placed in Jesus alone (John 20:27-29)

II. The applications:

1) We must examine ourselves to make sure we have the shield of true saving faith (2 Corinthians 13:5).

2) We must “take up” - actively use, - the shield faith (Ephesians 6:16), which involves our mind, our emotions, and our will.

**“The Shield of Faith”**

John 20:19-31; Ephesians 6:16b

As we continue our study of spiritual warfare we come to Ephesians 6:16b, *“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”* By way of background, we read about the struggle Thomas had with his faith in John 20:19-31:

*19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

*21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*

*22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”*

*24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”*

*But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.”*

*26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”*

*28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”*

*29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

*30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

May the Lord bless the reading of His holy and infallible Word to your life and mine.

Congregation in the Lord Jesus Christ,

For Roman soldiers in battle, having the right shield could mean the difference between life and death. There were several shields used by the Roman army but there were two shields that were used more often than any others.

The first one was a small shield that could be held in one hand. It was shaped like a large Frisbee and was strapped to a soldier's forearm and shoulder, but he could move it around rapidly for hand to hand combat. If a sword was being jabbed toward him, he could quickly move his forearm and protect himself from the sword.

The other shield was much larger, about 4 half feet high by 2 and a half feet wide. It was made of wood and covered with metal, though some were covered with a thick, treated leather. People were smaller in stature than people today, and the four and half by two and a half foot shield gave a Roman soldier a good deal of protection as he advanced forward in a row to engage the enemy in battle.

However, this larger shield, which is the one spoken about in Ephesians 6, needed to be flame retardant. It was common in the first century to coat tips of arrows with tar and ignite the arrows before releasing the bow, so it was crucial that the shield was flame retardant. Imagine the fate of any soldier caught without his shield; he would soon be set ablaze. The same fate would await any soldier with a shield that did not have the protective coating; such a shield could not withstand the flame of the burning arrow.

Now the same is true in the Christian life. We, too, are at war, and our enemy sends many flaming arrows our way. Some arrows are directed at the mind, to stir up doubt. This is what happened to Thomas. He was known for his pessimism and tendency to doubt (John 11:16). And now as the other disciples describe how they have seen Jesus he thinks, "Jesus? Rise from the dead? That's impossible...! I'm a rational person, I can't believe that!"

Other arrows are directed at the will, to keep us from doing what we should. This is part of what agonized Paul as he realized the corruption of his sinful nature, even as a redeemed child of God. He writes: "*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" (Romans 7:24-25).

Other arrows are directed at our conscience: "Is it really that wrong to do this...? Everyone else is doing it... It can't be that wrong... Besides, - who will ever know...?" That arrow worked great with Achan.... (Joshua 7) Also with Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1-11), and so many others who never had the shield of faith in its proper place.

As those flaming arrows, and many others like them come our way, we must make sure that we have the right shield. We need to have the shield of faith in Jesus Christ alone. There are so many people who think they have the shield of faith, but in actuality, they are holding a shield that is totally ineffective against the flaming arrows of the evil one. For instance:

### **Faith That God Exists**

For instance, surveys reveal that almost 90 percent of Americans still "believe in God."

However, when you question them about who God is you seldom get a biblical definition.

To many who “believe in God,” God is a loving but somewhat frail grandfather in the sky.... Others who profess to believe in God see Him as a force of good that lives in everybody; to them human goodness is really “*Godness*”.... To still others who profess to believe in God, God is just the comic force - or universal spirit - that brought the universe together, probably through a big bang.

That type of general faith in God cannot save you, nor can it shield you from the flaming arrows of the evil one. Even demons believe that God exists, but knowing the power of God and His righteous wrath at sin, they shudder. James 2:19: “*You believe there is one God? Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder.*”

### **Faith the Bible is True**

A second group of people believe that they are shielded by faith because not only are they among the 90 percent who “believe in God,” but they also believe that the Bible is the Word of God.

According to a Gallup Poll conducted in 2007, 31 percent of Americans believe that the Bible is the actual, literal Word of God. In that same poll 49 percent of Americans believed that the Bible is inspired by God, though that group also believes there is human error mixed in with the inspired writings.

Many of these people would say: “The Bible must be God’s Word. After all, it is the perennial best seller... It has so many wise sayings in it: Live by the Golden Rule, observe the 10 commandments, be a good, kind compassionate person. Certainly with a message like that the Bible must be the word of God,” they say.

But that in itself is not a faith that forms a shield against the flaming arrows of the evil one. After all, Satan himself believes that the Bible is God’s holy and inspired Word. When Satan tempted Jesus in the desert he argued by using the Scriptures. He didn’t argue against the Scriptures, but rather he used the Scriptures as the Word of God to persuasively tempt Jesus to do evil. Matthew 4:5-6: says, “*Then the devil took him (Jesus) to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down. For it is written:*

*“He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”*

## Faith in Miracles

Still others go beyond faith in God and the Bible to place their faith in miracles. Not content with the Word of God alone, such people look for the extraordinary - the spectacular - and place their faith in miracles.

Many within the great multitudes that followed Jesus were following Him to see what type of miracles He would perform. Their focus was on the spectacular. Would He feed 5000 with a few loaves and fish? Would He make more of that wine that was better than any wine anyone had ever tasted? Would he heal the lame today? Give sight to the blind? Raise the dead?

That's why many in the multitudes followed Him. They weren't all there with a saving faith. Many, - if not most - were following Jesus to see the spectacular, the extraordinary. "Show us the miracles!" they said in effect.

No different today. The fastest growing branch of the visible church is the Pentecostal branch. The emphasis of most Pentecostalism, including the very popular "Third Wave of Pentecostalism," is on signs, wonders and miracles. Turn on the TV for "religious programming" and more than likely you will find pastors who are amazing people with their healing powers, with their ability to do miracles, signs and wonders.

But belief in miracles doesn't save anyone. Nor does such a belief provide a shield of armor against the flaming arrows of the evil one. Even Judas Iscariot believed in the power of miracles. He was among the 12 who were given power by God to perform miracles, as recorded in Matthew 10. But that wasn't enough. Judas was putty in the hands of the devil; he could never withstand the flaming arrows that came his way.

## True Saving Faith in Jesus Alone

A fourth type of faith is a true saving faith which is placed in Jesus Christ alone. Thomas certainly came to that place of acceptance. After Jesus showed him His hands and His side, Thomas believed. He exclaimed, "*My Lord and my God!*" Then Jesus said to him, "*Because you have seen Me you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" (John 20:28,29).

This passage reminds us that to be blessed by faith our faith must be placed in Jesus Christ alone. Our faith must be more than a general belief in God, or that the Bible is the Word of God, or that Jesus really performed miracles. Our faith needs to be more specific; it must be focused directly on Christ and Him alone.

Someone may have great faith, but if it is not placed in Jesus alone it will not bring salvation from sin, nor will not form a shield against the flaming arrows of the evil one. Our faith is only as good as the object of our faith. And the object of our faith must be Jesus Christ alone.

Sir Donald Campbell held many of the world speed records for both cars and boats. However, he lost his life while racing a boat in Scotland as the speedboat he was racing suddenly exploded and rapidly sank. The only thing to surface after the explosion was a toy stuffed animal, Campbell's "good luck charm." He brought it with him in every race, whether in a car or a boat. But faith is only as good as its object. And our faith is only effective when it is placed in Jesus Christ alone.

This teaching of justification by faith alone is, incidentally, at the heart of our Reformed Theology. It is the essence of what was taught in the great Protestant Reformation of the 16 century. Luther, Calvin, Knox, and so many others stressed that we are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone, according to the Scriptures alone, for the glory of God alone.

By way of application, we must examine ourselves to make sure we have the right shield, the shield of true saving faith in Jesus Christ. The Scriptures tell us to examine ourselves, to make sure that we are in the faith. 2 Corinthians 13:5: *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"* A crucial part of the test of faith is to ask ourselves, "Who am I trusting in for salvation? What is my faith really based on?"

You won't be saved by a warm fuzzy concept of God. You won't be saved because you believe the Bible is the "Good Book." No one will be saved just because they believed in miracles. You and I are only saved by faith in Jesus. Faith that is not placed in Christ alone is worthless faith, - unable to save us, unable to shield us.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "It is faith in something that makes life worth living." A lot of people thought that was a profound statement. But Holmes was way off. It is only faith in Christ that makes life worth living, for such faith gives us eternal life and also provides a shield against the many flaming arrows of the evil one.

### **Take Up the Shield**

If by God's grace, you and I possess such faith, then our text says in Ephesians 6:16, *"take up the shield of faith."* In other words, faith is not a passive thing in the life of a Christian, but rather faith in Christ must permeate every part of our lives. Theologians like to mention that true saving faith involves our intellect, our emotions and our will (or volition). Sometimes it is spoken of as knowledge, assent, and trust.

We certainly see that in the transformation of Thomas. When Jesus confronted Thomas and showed him His hands and sides, Thomas believed intellectually. Thomas believed that Jesus truly had died and rose again. Jesus then said to him, *"Because you have seen Me you have believed; blessed are those who have not see and yet have believed."* True saving faith needs our mental, intellectual acknowledgment that Jesus lived, died, and rose again for our salvation.

And when we believe that in our mind, it affects our emotions. Did you notice the exclamation mark at the end of verse 28, where Thomas exclaims, “*My Lord and my God!*” You see, the knowledge that he had from seeing Jesus went from his head to his heart. Whenever there is true saving faith it goes beyond head knowledge to our heart.

When by faith we believe in Jesus with our mind, are affected in our emotions, then our will - our volition - will also be affected. While we aren't told about the life and activities of Thomas after this incident, we can rest assured that his will, his volition, along with all the other disciples and apostles, was changed as well. From that point on he undoubtedly had a great desire to do what was right in God's sight, to actively and wholeheartedly live for the One who had died for Him and arose again for his salvation. The same must be true in your life and mine.



For Roman soldiers in battle, having the right shield could mean the difference between life and death. The same is true in your life and mine. We, too, are at war, and our enemy sends many flaming arrows our way. Next week, the Lord willing, we will look more closely at those arrows so that we might be better prepared to use the armor God provides against the attack of the evil one. But in the meantime, and always, may you and I take up that shield of faith in Christ alone for salvation. It is the only shield that is effective against the flaming arrows of the evil one. Amen.