

Chapter 5 - The Shield of Faith

In Ephesians 6:16, Paul tells us to take up the shield of faith. What's interesting to note is that the original Greek word for "shield" here is *thereos* (Strong's #2375). It comes from the root word *thyra* which means a door. The large oblong four-cornered shield was given the name "thyreos" because of its resemblance to a door. Typically, these shields were made of wood and covered with leather. The Romans used a similar shield (though it was concave) in ancient warfare known as the Great Scuta, and although they haven't been in use since around 300 AD, there is still one in existence at the Yale University Art Gallery.

These shields differed in design from the circular shields known at the time as the *aspis*. While the *aspis* was easier to carry and maneuver during combat, it couldn't provide the same protection that the *thyreos* could. With *thereos* in hand, soldiers were able to stand shoulder to shoulder forming a wall of protection. 2nd, 3rd, and 4th row soldiers formed a roof of protection by holding their shields overhead. This protected the army from flaming arrows both in front of them and from above. Google "thyreos formation" on Google Images and you'll see what I'm talking about.

Note that Paul writes "above all that," or "in addition to all that," take up the shield of faith. We're already being protected by other pieces of armor, but he's stressing the importance here of extra protection.

I remember back about 20 years ago to when my brother-in-law won \$25,000 dollars in a scratch and win lottery. It wasn't enough for him to keep the ticket locked in the house for the night, he put it under his pillow for an extra layer of protection. He had to ensure that ticket was safe.

I remember buckling my babies into the car when they were young. I didn't just buckle them into their car seat, I made sure that the car seat was in the centre for that extra layer of protection.

If faith in Christ is our most valuable asset, shouldn't we also go to great lengths to protect it? Paul is telling us here to put on that extra layer of protection to shield ourselves from the flaming arrows of the evil one.

In ancient warfare, the Romans fastened pitch-soaked rags to their arrows with wire. These flammable rags were then lit on fire and launched at enemy lines. In order to quench those darts, the shields were saturated in water before going to battle.

So, what are these fiery darts that Satan is launching? What exactly are we shielding ourselves from?

John MacArthur points out that "the heart of all sin is dissatisfaction." In other words, the less we are satisfied, the more we'll be tempted. And so, we lust after power, money, attention, love, food, sex, beauty, and more. The thing is however, if we're not content with the things that we

have, we won't be content if we're given more. Satan knows that dissatisfaction is the Achilles' heel of mankind. He knows that we hunger for more and so we're met with temptation day after day.

We're all born with a God-shaped hole inside of us that's waiting to be filled. Some people are filling that space with money and power and lust, but those who fill it with Christ are the ones who are most content in this world.

You can't expect to stay on a diet if you're spending most of your time in the bakery section of a supermarket. It's hard to resist the charms of a married co-worker if you're dating each other at lunch. In other words, if you don't want to be tempted, don't invite temptation for lunch. Don't open the door, or it will move in and take over your home.

These darts are the arguments that we entertain. The ones that justify our sin, and tempt us to step in further yet. These are the arrows that distort the truth of God's word, and reshape it into something it's not. But if we're truly immersed in God's Word, we know the truth from a lie.

Arrows can travel well over 1,000 feet, but here's the interesting thing to remember. The farther the enemy is from the target the less powerful the arrows will be. In other words, the further we are from temptation, the less powerful Satan will be.

Here's a practical example of that. During our first few years of marriage, my husband and I were clueless when it came to our credit. We were easily drawn in by the "Don't Pay a Cent Event" slogans, and like a lot of young couples we misused our credit card any chance that we had. Thankfully our credit limit wasn't high enough to get us into any serious trouble, but it was high enough to give us a scare as we quickly reached our credit limit.

One Saturday afternoon, we came to the mutual conclusion to freeze our credit. Literally. Filling a small plastic bowl full of water, we froze the credit card into a solid block of ice. Our reasoning behind this was that if we really needed to access the credit card it would be there, but we'd have to wait for the ice to melt. In other words, it wouldn't be nearly as accessible as it was before. This separation from temptation was exactly what we needed to get back on track.

Separation from temptation goes a long way in protecting our hearts, but it's not our only means of protection. Anytime that we're angry or fearful or left wanting more, we can look to His Word to find hope. There's joy to be found in our faith when we trust in the wisdom of God. There's incomparable peace to found in those pages. Words that remind us this world's not our home. A Savior who tells us that He's coming back. Love that sent our Lord to the cross so that we might be saved. These are the faith-building blocks that we glean from God's Word. These are the things that fill the God-shaped hole that's within us.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. And so, we must be immersed in His Word as we fight the good fight. Like a soldier who immerses his shield in the river before going to battle, we too must be immersed by the cleansing power of His Word.

The Bible tells us, "Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings." (1 Peter 5:9, NIV)

Pause and Reflect

What are the fiery darts spoken of in Ephesians Chapter 6?

How are the shields made fire-proof?

From where does faith originate?

Why is dissatisfaction so dangerous to a believer?

What are the faith-building blocks we glean from God's word?

What has cleansing power?

Fill in the blanks:

No _____ that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their _____ is of me, saith the Lord. (Isaiah 54:17, KJV)

Be _____ and _____. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”
(Deuteronomy 31:6, NIV)

But you, Lord, are _____ around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. (Psalm 3:3, NIV)

What are some of the lies that Satan has been firing at you? Under each one, mark down a fire-quenching truth.