

7 - THE SHIELD OF FAITH

*“16 In all circumstances take up **the shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.”*

Ephesians 6:16 (ESV)

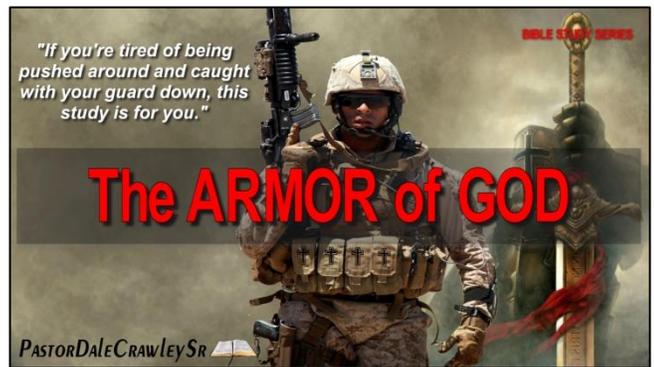
(Context: READ Ephesians 6:10-20)

“REAL FAITH” ... Faith is one of the greatest gifts, and it is the means by which we receive grace and come into right relationship with God. Faith is the doorway to hope in God. Because we have faith in God, our suffering need not paralyze us; in fact, we can persevere under it. The things Satan attempts to use to discourage us can actually become tools in the hands of God.

“The shield of faith” can also be called the shield that is faith ... because the shield is actually faith itself. **So, what is faith? Here’s a working definition ... faith is “acting as if God is telling you the truth.”**

Faith is directly tied to an action done in response to a revealed truth.* **“If you don’t know the truth, or if you don’t act on the truth, the shield of faith is impotent. In order to have faith, you have to know and respond to truth.”**

Satan’s attacks can sometimes cause us to doubt God. Faith prompts us to believe God. **When we believe God ... and take Him at His word, we remain grounded in truth**, the lies of the enemy lose their power, and we become overcomers. **In that way, faith is our shield.**



TAKING THE SHIELD

Up until now, Paul's description of the armor of God has been limited to items we wear. We put on the belt, the breastplate and the shoes, and they essentially hold themselves up. The shield is different. Paul tells us that the shield is something we must **“take up, something we are required to raise.”** Just strapping it to our arm won't do any good at all if we don't make the effort to hold it aloft and use it.

How did the shield work in the Roman army?

The Roman shield—the *scutum*—was a very large, slightly curved rectangular shield featuring at its center a large metal knob (called a *boss*).



“Roman Scutum”

The *scutum* was an impressive line of defense. Because of its sheer size (some were three and a half feet tall and almost three feet wide), soldiers were afforded a great deal of protection from enemies. Because of its slight curve, it was able to deflect attacks without transferring the full force of the assault to the man holding the shield. ***Because of its boss...*** it was able to deflect even the more vicious blows and function in a limited offensive capacity as a means of knocking an opponent backwards.

When positioned correctly underneath the protection of a shield, the soldiers were completely covered.” At times when the battles were fierce, the soldiers would even link their shields together so that the entire army could hide behind whatever was thrown at them.

So when does a Christian need to take up his shield? “*Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day*” (Ephesians 6:13).

The evil day is the day that all hell breaks loose in your life – when you are under attack ...

- It’s when the finances are so low, and you don’t know how you are going to make it through the end of the week.
- It’s when you’ve lost your job, and there is no new job in sight.
- It when you are breaking down emotionally and have lost your passion for life.
- It’s when your marriage seems hopeless, your kids have turned away, your health deteriorates, or your future looks bleak.
- It’s when your friend has betrayed you, you’re overcome by an addiction or impulse, or life seems to deliver any other piercing stab.”

It is on this day – what Scripture calls ‘*the evil day*’ – that you especially need to be covered. You need protection because on this day you are most vulnerable to the targeted attacks of the evil one.

Remember ... Faith is directly tied to an action done in response to a revealed truth.* It’s interesting to me that we are back to this issue of truth. I see so clearly why the belt of truth is the first piece of armor we are told to put on. **Remember, “truth is fundamentally God’s viewpoint on a matter.”**

Faith is never based on how much faith you feel. Faith is always based on your feet – what you do in response to what you believe. Faith is acting on the truth whether I feel the truth or not. It’s acting on truth whether I like the truth or not. It’s also acting on the truth whether I agree with the truth or not. ***Simply put, “faith is a function of the mind that shows up in the feet”!***

Often, we think we need more faith when what we need is more truth. Faith is the point of access, not the source of power. Faith is only as valuable as the thing to which it is tied. In other words ... **Your view of God, how big you think He is, will determine the size of your faith."**

It is important to understand that *the shield of faith* has been given to us to protect us from the deceptive strategies of the enemy. When you use it properly, this shield will enable you to advance against the enemy because you will be confident that what God has said about your situation, in His Word and through His promises – is true.

How else can the shield be used?

The Roman military had an inventive and very effective tactic that made use of their large shields. When enemies would begin firing arrows and other projectiles at the army, the soldiers would close ranks into a rectangular array—**called the testudo, or "tortoise," formation**—and those on the outside would use their shields to create a wall around the perimeter. Then those in the middle would raise their shields over their heads to protect everyone from airborne missiles. The result was a formidable human tank that could be stopped only through a tremendous effort.

When the Roman army joined its shields together, it became an almost unstoppable force. And if we in God's Church join our shields—that is, strengthen each other with our faith, building up and serving within the Body as we are able—we will become an unstoppable force able to take on any challenge.

We must remember as we fight that this is not simply our battle. This is the battle of all our brethren, both near and around the world. And if we are to win, it will only be once we put our faith in God and stand side by side, contending earnestly and as one for **"our common salvation...the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"** (Jude 1:3).

OUR FAITH IS FOUNDED ON THE PROMISES OF GOD

How familiar are we with these promises? Do you know what God has promised you? If our knowledge of and trust in them are unsteady, we will be too. **Study God's Word to learn of His promises ... Claim those promises and keep that shield up!**