

ARMOR OF GOD

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS WITH PASTOR JACK

Knowing our Adversary and the Armor of God

Week 7: (Ephesians 6:16) Shield of Faith

November 4th, 2015

Introduction

- A. We spent three weeks looking at knowing our adversary -- Satan's character and person, and his method of operations against both the world under his grasp and the saints of God whom he seeks to oppose.
- B. We then spent three more weeks focusing on the Armor God has provided us to withstand the enemy and to remain standing. Thus far, all three parts of the armor we have seen were constantly worn by the soldier: the belt, breastplate, and shoes.
- C. The purpose for the armor is simple -- though we have victory in Christ (Rom.8:37)(1Co.15:57) (2Co.2:14)(1Jn.5:5), we have to appropriate this armor to enjoy practically what is a positional truth given to us by faith in Him.

The Roman Shields of War

- A. The Aspis: a small round shield strapped to the forearm and used in hand-to-hand battles.
- B. The Thureon: a large wooden shield (4' x 2') covered with metal or treated leather, with hooks on the end to be able to latch onto the soldier next to you. It provided protection by being stuck into the ground at a 45 degree angle so the soldier could climb underneath.
- C. It is the thureon that is mentioned here and it is the first of three pieces of armor that were not worn daily but kept within arms reach to be employed as needed. It is introduced by the word taking in our text, as opposed to the first three pieces that were introduced by the word having.
- D. The purpose of this shield was to provide safe haven from surprise attacks from flaming arrows shot from afar. Fiery arrows were never used in close combat, only from a distance; the equivalent to our modern day bombing run.

Spiritually Applied

- A. This is a shield of faith. Though it is the word most often used for faith in the Scriptures (pistis), its context demands we understand it not as saving faith or a gift of faith, but rather the daily exercise of faith that is to be found in every saint as he engages in this warfare with the enemy.
- B. This faith will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Satan does attack from every direction while staying out of sight (1Jn.2:16). Yet, whatever the strategy, the shield of faith is the solution.
- C. These specific attacks, however, fall into a category all of their own. Not the run-of-the-mill daily harassment, these rather are vicious, come out of nowhere, and seem to besiege your entire being all at once.
- D. The answer from the Lord at these overwhelming times is specific and difficult: get down behind the shield of faith and stay there until the onslaught is over. To run is to be further exposed to danger. Simply sit tight and hang on, faith in the Lord will be your shield!

Walking with the Giants

- A. When the enemy comes in like a flood, it is the Lord who will raise up a dam (a standard) against him (Isa.59:19). A standard is a way out, an escape hatch, a resolution. Even great men of God have been plagued with doubts and difficulties while being greatly used. We should not be surprised to face them, too (1Pe.4:16-17).

- B. This armor is not a quick fix but a lasting help. Foundational truths of God's Word will keep us when the circumstances seem to challenge our understanding (Ps.73:1)(Rom.8:28,31) (1Co.10:13). There is no way to wield a sword at a fiery arrow, instead we must simply take cover.
- C. That He is our hiding place takes on new meaning (Ps.91)(Heb.11).

The Just Shall Live by Faith

- A. Six little words change our lives: the just shall live by faith (Hab.2:4)(Gal.3:11)(Heb.10:38-39).
- B. So faith may require sitting and waiting for deliverance to come (1Pe.5:8-9)(1Jn.5:4). This shield is simply a defense, having no offensive properties whatsoever.
- C. Look at Abraham's example (Rom.4:18-25). We turn to our Lord and find shelter indeed (Gen.15:1)(Ps.46:1)(Ps.84:11)!

Conclusion

- A. Next week we will cover the helmet of salvation (Eph.6:17a), so read ahead.

All right. Let's open our Bibles this evening to Ephesians 6:16, as we continue tonight in our series *Knowing Our Adversary and the Armor of God*. If you haven't been with us the whole time, all of our studies and all of the notes are in the archives on the website. They're also in the book store if you like to go the DVD route.

Introduction

A. Knowing our Adversary

We spent three weeks looking at, specifically, our adversary the devil - from his creation to his fall to the methods of operation that he uses against the world (those that are lost and in darkness and those, then, that are saved - God's people); what is Satan's plan, and his ways are certainly laid out in the Scriptures. Paul said, "We certainly shouldn't be ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). So, we spent three weeks looking specifically at him.

B. The Armor of God to withstand the enemy and to remain standing

We then began, here in Ephesians 6, this in-depth look at the armor of God, Paul's last word in Ephesians to the saints about what we should wear and what God has provided so that we would bear up well when the enemy of our soul comes to oppose and to withstand. And Paul uses these very nice phrases. He said, we should stand, and we should withstand, and having done all we should still be standing. So our walk with God, as believers in the world, there're these conflicts, aren't there? And God has provided this armor. So we've been spending time on Wednesday nights taking this armor one piece at a time and tonight come to verse 16 where it talks about, "above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."

C. We must appropriate the Armor of God

We focused the past three weeks on three pieces of armor that every Roman soldier would always wear - his belt, his breastplate and his shoes. We looked at the spiritual significance. We told you that Paul was now chained to a Roman soldier. He was imprisoned. He was under house arrest. They didn't really know what the end result of his trial would be. But, in any event, Paul, looking at this soldier all of the time, thought, "Man, that's exactly what God has provided." And he took the armor that is easily seen, and he gave it spiritual significance, and as such, we are given this wonderful study as to what we can do to stand fast in our battle with the enemy.

Well tonight, we want to begin to look at the second portion of armor pieces - the next three. These were not always worn by the soldier, but they were kept close at hand. So the first

three were worn no matter what, but these were within easy reach when they were needed, and this fourth piece of armor, like I said (verse 16), is the shield of faith.

So throughout the studies, and I hope you haven't missed it, and through all that God gives us, the biblical truth is - you win. Right? In Christ, you're ultimately a victor in Him. The battle has been won. The price has been paid. So, that positional truth that the Scriptures declare, that "we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37); that we are victorious in Christ. He always "gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:57); that we will always triumph, "thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14). And that John writes, in his old age, "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5).

So the end result of these battles is not in question. But, though the outcome has been decided, the experience of our daily life can be different from what God has promised us in His Son. We can head towards that victory by faith, or we can capitulate and whimper our way through like Lot. Thankfully Peter told us Lot made it - I wouldn't have known otherwise that Lot made it except Peter said he did. Not much fruit that you can find in Lot's life; God's grace, certainly. So, we want to be more than conquerors in a practical reality as well, and if you're going to do that, you're going to have to put on this armor.

The Roman Shields of War

So verse 16 is our focus tonight. There were several different kinds of shields that Roman soldiers used. But there were two, in particular, that stand out and that find themselves, more often than not, in the literature that is written and even in the shields that have been found as each soldier faced warfare.

A. The "*Aspis*"

The first one was called the "*aspis*," and an "*aspis*" is maybe the thing that you typically see. It was a round shield that was strapped with leather (if you were right-handed in fighting) to the left forearm. It was very light. It was always used in hand-to-hand combat. It was designed to block sword blows, if you will, when you were fighting with someone. And it's the kind that you might have seen in the Ben Hur movies or in the Hercules movies; or if you saw the movie 300 (it was a lousy movie, but if you saw that movie), they had a lot of those. So that's one - the one that you wore here. That's not this word.

B. The "*Thureon*"

There is another Greek word for shield, and the Greek word is "*thureon*." And it's an entirely different animal. It was really a large wooden plank. It broke down easily and opened itself easily. It was sometimes four feet long, two or three feet wide. It was sometimes called the door-shaped shield, if you will. It was covered on the outside with metal or sometimes with treated leather. It had tabs on the side so it could be slotted together with another soldier next to you. And it was designed simply to stick in the ground at a 45-degree angle, and when

the arrows were shot in your direction, you would just hide underneath it. It literally just absorbed the arrows that came flying through the air. You would have remembered seeing it in Braveheart. Braveheart had a lot of these arrows that were flying by the hundreds. And so this thing could set up quickly. It was designed to protect you, not in hand-to-hand combat but from the deadly surprise attack of the enemy. You couldn't see it coming. You couldn't anticipate it. It wasn't something that you planned for. You had a shield, if you will, to protect you, but the volley came from an unseen enemy. It's like that fearful word "incoming," you know, and you just have to get down and kind of hunker down.

C. The "*thureon*" is kept within arm's reach

Well, that's the word that's used here. It's that shield that Paul makes mention of. Not the little hand shield that you would fight with but this one. And the words "above all" - maybe it's a tough translation in the New King James. It literally is "on top of everything else" or "in addition to." It doesn't mean that this is more important than something else, but this has to be added on top of what you've already been given. So the Greek grammar modifies the shield of faith, and the two are other pieces of armor that follow it. So the helmet, the sword of the Spirit - put these on as well. Take these with you. These are going to be important.

We mentioned to you, I think, a couple of times, but it bears repeating I guess, that the distinction between the first three pieces of armor and the last part, as I said, the first three (verses 14 and 15) were always worn, and they are modified by the word "having." So if you read verses 14 and 15, you'll read "having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." The next three pieces - these ones that would be taken up from time to time as they were needed - are modified by the word "taking." So you would take these up. The helmet, you would take it up, and put it on. The sword, you would take it up, and put it on. The shield would be close at hand to be taken up. And so you see that here, in our text in verses 16 and 17, is the word "taking."

D. This shield provides safe haven from surprise attacks

So this shield that Paul now refers to was kept close at hand so that when the enemy, in his hiding place, would seek to take you out from afar, catch you by surprise, you would have someplace to hide. It would literally be a place that you could just tuck in and wait it out.

Spiritually Applied

A. This is a shield of faith

Now I want you to notice - because Paul, again, makes a spiritual application to what we were given - this is a shield. It is that shield, that hiding shield, but it is the shield of faith. And though it is the general word in Greek for "faith," it is, by its own definition and function, obvious that it is to provide protection to you from the fiery darts of the devil. It is a place where you just get out from under the onslaught, if you will. It is not saving faith that is

referred to here. It is not the gift of faith that God gives you (as we went through the gifts of the Spirit a while ago), that God would give you at a certain place and time for a specific situation, that you don't normally have hold of but God hands it to you. It is, rather, this active, daily, practically-applied, trusting God in His Word that every believer has to grow in and that can be used to protect you when the enemy comes in and catches you off guard. It is faith that you have learned to know of God, utilized under siege. That's really what it amounts to. It is the grabbing hold of what I know about God and His Word when things just come apart, when the wheels fall off, when all hell breaks loose, when the house falls over, when the wind blows way too hard, and I've got nowhere to turn. That's really this word for the shield of faith.

B. This faith quenches all of the wicked one's fiery darts

And notice that it is to quench, put out, extinguish all of the fiery darts of the wicked one. Not some of them. This shield of faith works for all of them. For every single one of them. And it is the devil - here, the word "wicked one," "*poneros*," is singular. It literally refers to the wicked one behind all of the wickedness - the head honcho, if you will. Now, it is important to our understanding the armor to know that fiery darts were never used in close combat. Nobody used a fiery dart from two feet away. You used your sword. But if you're trying to hit somebody over there, if you were a good marksman with a bow and the arrow, then you might very well seek to take somebody out from far away. And really, this protection that God provides for us here, in this illustration that Paul is using, was not for close combat but was for ambush, was for surprise attacks. So, first and foremost, the enemy will sometimes come into your life in a way that you weren't expecting, you weren't ready for. Everything was going fine, and then that happened. "Now what? Where did that come from? What am I supposed to do now?" And it would be the modern-day equivalent to dropping a bomb. Everything seems fine, and then the house explodes. It seems like everything's going well, and now nothing is going well. And, "Where in the world.....yesterday was just beautiful, and look at my life today!" It's a surprise attack from a distance; not a face-to-face confrontation but one where you don't even see it coming.

Historically, and especially from a Roman time standpoint, arrows that Romans used were almost always made of ash or they were made of oak - very hard wood - and they were dipped in tar or pitch, if you will. They were lit, and tar burns extremely hot, and it splatters in every direction when it hits something. So this thing was like an ancient Molotov cocktail. It would hit something, and it was like a hand grenade, just have to be close. If it just hits a tree, and it's by you, you could be burned to the point where you would be effectively put out of business. So, it set the area ablaze. It came out of nowhere. It was deadly and dangerous. You couldn't really anticipate it. And from a spiritual standpoint, Satan and his spirits do come at us sometimes from any direction with great intensity, using every trick that he has because, remember, he wants to destroy you. He'd like to have you in hell with him. Well, he's lost you to Jesus. So now all he can do is make you ineffective, shelf you, get you to struggle to get through life, not make any progress, not bear any fruit. Just get by as opposed to going by victoriously, as God has given you a promise through His Son. So when John writes in 1 John 2:16 about "all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of

life - is not of the Father but is of the world," that's Satan's tool bag. Right? And it comes to us sometimes in ways that we can't even begin to plan for.

C. These attacks can come out of nowhere

The goal of any fiery dart attack is to stop the movement of an army in your direction, to stop progress; literally to turn you around or to just make you stop. "I can't go any further. It's too dangerous. I'm not going to risk my life." If he can get you running from the battlefield, that's great. Because he just wants your faith to be lacking or your response to be ungodly in such a way that you are neutralized or that he's neutralizing your influence or your gains in the Lord. That's what he wants - put an end to you. Make sure that you don't go any further. And these can be fierce attacks, they can be fiery. That's a pretty good word, isn't it? And they can come from nowhere it seems. These aren't your daily living, regular trials that you face each day. "Oh, the light's red, the freeway's crowded, I got a flat tire. Oh, man, they ran out of my favorite coke at the market." This is the all-hell-breaks-loose-at-my-house kind of onslaught. This is the devil has left the spiritual world, and he's moved into the third bedroom in the house - that kind of onslaught. For those of us who find those things - and all of us will - we need this "*thureon*," this shield to hide behind and protect ourselves until the attack subsides.

I'm sure that many of you have read The Pilgrim's Progress - John Bunyan's book that he wrote from the Bedford Prison - the allegory that he wrote about the Christian life. But if you've ever read through it, he absolutely captures - with tremendously great descriptions - some of the fiery darts and how they come in your direction and how they move us or can move us away from where we are supposed to be standing fast. He can literally get us off our game, and it's almost like an earthquake moving somebody off the building. It comes out of nowhere, and it leaves destruction behind. Martin Luther, while he was working on what would become his "Ninety-Five Theses" (I don't think he necessarily thought he was going to get them in print) to counter the whole Catholic Church's position on grace versus works, felt so tormented in that battle with the devil that he actually physically threw his inkwell at this invisible assailant who just seemed to be overwhelming him, and he hit the door with it, and he stained the door in the Wittenburg Church - which you can still see today. It was almost like he said, "Look, materialize, and you've had it!" I think all of us in our experience will bear out the truth that sometimes the enemy can be brutal. I don't know about for you, but, because I teach every week, Wednesdays - Sunday's not so bad because you wake up, and you're here - but by Wednesday night, sometimes Wednesdays can be the worst day for us in the office. The things that should not go wrong tend to go wrong on church night, church day. It can get ridiculous. Sometimes it's just irritating. Other times it's just overwhelming. I find myself, if I'm studying, that there's a dog next door who decided to be possessed by the devil all of a sudden. (Laughing) Just howls for hours on end, and nobody's home. I've never heard it.....like a coyote. I don't know. There's always something, and it seems like the enemy wants to cause havoc. These aren't terrible things, mind you, but they tend to just come out of nowhere, and it is easy sometimes when things go bad to just sometimes quit the battle altogether.

D. Get down behind the shield of faith, sit tight and hang on!

Sometimes the only thing that you can do - while the enemy is raging - is to just sit still. Hard counsel. But you've just got to get under what you know about God and just wait it out. You know? You've just got to kind of wait it out. The enemy is raging, the darts are many, and faith would say, "Let me just wait on the Lord." There's no sense reacting. There isn't much benefit in screaming. It doesn't do you much good to give up because he'll run out of darts eventually. But until then, I have protection for my heart, for my life, for my outlook, for my wellbeing. And the protection that I have is what I know about God and what God has said. He assures me that He knows me, that He loves me, that He won't leave me, that He'll never forsake me, that He'll finish the work that He started, that all things work together for good. I can make a whole list of things I just know about God, and if you know those things, sometimes the only thing you can do - because you're getting attacked like nobody's business - is to just wait. This is a purely defensive shield. There's nothing offensive about taking a four-foot door and running into battle. You just kind of hunker underneath it, and let the thing fly and protect you. Sit tight. Hang on. At times the only counsel we can give those who come to us with their disastrous life, and it seems to be that way, is just you've got to trust the Lord, just wait upon God. It's not a good time to move forward. It's not a good time to build a house. It's not a good time to try to make some headway in your walk. It's not necessarily the best time to grow spiritually or see fruit. Just hang on! God knows. Hang on to what you know about Him. Sit back and rest, and let your faith in the Lord be the shield that protects you from the attacks of the enemy. And man, they'll come.

Walking with the Giants

A. The Lord raises a standard against the enemy

Our daily struggles are almost laughable and of little consequence when compared to what sometimes can roll into our lives and leave us on the floor, gasping for air. Isaiah described it by saying sometimes the enemy's barrage is like a dam that breaks loose. You've had that in your life, I know you have. Most life is fairly simple, and then there're those days or weeks or months where you just, "Oh, my gosh. You've got to be kidding me!" And all we can try to do is hang on until the water subsides. In fact Isaiah, in that passage, says, "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19). And the word "standard" in Hebrew means a way out or an escape hatch or a way to flee.

Some of the greatest saints in church history have found themselves so used by God and yet so struggled in their own personal lives. It's almost amazing. It's almost like two sides of a different coin. I don't know if you've ever had a chance to read Warren Wiersbe's book, Walking With The Giants. If you haven't, I would highly recommend you read it. There are short little five- or six-page insights into saints who have done glorious things in the past - men and women of great faith - but it also documents their struggles that they faced while the enemy was slaughtering them, and they were standing fast. There is a story of a pastor who had regularly 18,000 people coming to a graveyard on Sundays because he wasn't allowed to speak in the churches, and he would, without a microphone, preach to 18,000 people. Can you

imagine? Thousand. Right? That's a third of Angel Stadium - filled. And people would show up every Sunday to hear this guy preach. I mean, he could have said, "I am the man! I am.....look what the Lord has done with my life." And God would use him in these remarkable ways. People were getting saved right and left. And yet he would go home every Sunday afternoon and agonize in tears before the Lord, feeling like he was such a failure that he very often wouldn't come out until the next Sunday. Just struggled with self-doubt and the attack of the enemy. But God used this man greatly. All he could do was sit, I think, and wait upon the Lord, and let God work. The only defense at a time like that would have been to crouch down behind this shield of faith.

Peter wrote, and we studied it on Sundays just a little while ago, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you" (1 Peter 4:12). This isn't strange. You're serving the Lord, man. Don't you think if you're in enemy territory serving God - you don't belong here, you belong to the Lord of all - and he's the god of this world, that you're going to have some trouble? And you can't always say, "Well, is that the devil, or is that just life?" I don't know, but it's a problem. And the answer to me is the same. I don't have to figure out if it's the devil or just life in general. I just know I'm going to hide in Him. Right? I don't need to know the cause. I know the source, and I know who the answer is as well.

B. Quick solutions versus lasting help

A lot of times people will come in, and they look for quick solutions. They want quick solutions to their dilemmas. They'll come in with a life that's falling apart and go, "Here you go. Fix this in 45 minutes. Come on, you can do it." And if they don't like your solution, they'll call back and want to talk to another pastor. "Is there anybody else I can talk to? I didn't really like his answers." The only solution sometimes is to let God be God. Wait upon Him in faith, weathering the storms. Jesus talked about building your house while the weather was good because when the storm comes, it's impossible to build. You've got to wait for good weather. So, build while the going's good, and then when the trials come, see how you're doing. See how the foundation looks. See how you're standing. Maybe you need to get out there and shore it up when the rain goes away. But, in any event, you want to build while you're able, and then stand when you have to; or sit in trusting in the Lord. You can call those things that you know basic foundational truths.

I think there are certain things that all of you know about God, whether you've been saved a long time or not very long, that just have to sustain you when what is going on in your life is almost unexplainable. You know? I know some things about God that don't change, even when my life changes, even when my circumstances change. Even when I fail or when I fall short, God doesn't change. So those things are places you can hang your hat, and you know that the hat'll still be there. For example, when Asaph, in Psalm 73:1, began writing, "Truly God is good to Israel," (that's a pretty good statement, right?) "to such as are pure in heart." The very next verse, "But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." And then he goes on for a long time, and he begins to say they die healthy, they curse God and get away with it, they have

all the riches of the world while the saints suffer and they're persecuted and they're put down, and they go without. But this wicked guy, who hates God, he's just whistling Dixie. "My feet almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped." Now he started with a foundational truth. "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart." But, "My feet almost slipped," and then he goes through this whole thing of observational analysis. "I see all the things that are going on, and somehow it challenges the foundational truth that I know." And then he finally said, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end" (verse 17). They're not going to make it, and I realize the foundational truth about God is true. You can hang your hat on it. You can stand fast on it. You can live and die with it. If you get to Romans 8:28, and you read, "All things work together for good to those who love God....." if you believe that to be so, that's a foundational truth that, no matter what happens to you, won't change. "Well, I lost my job, and now they've come to take my house. You tell me, pastor, how that's good." And I say, "I don't know. I have no idea. It looks rotten to me. But I know that all things work together for good." "Yeah, well it's easy for you to say." "Well, you'll be able to say that to me soon enough because all of us find those places where we have to apply what we've learned from a foundational point and get behind this shield and just hang on." The world is not a friendly place. The enemy is not a good guy. Life is tough, then you die. But then there's glory that waits. So we have to stand and withstand and having done all, we've got to stand. And it is these foundational truths that have to be those truths that are hidden in your heart. So when Paul writes to the Romans, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31), that's a truth that you should know. "Well, I wonder where the Lord is. If He loves me, how come I'm going through all this stuff?" (whining tone) Well there's no hope in that. Now you're doubting the Word of God. You're doubting the truths of God. You've left alone the protection of God that you've been given. Now you've set aside your shield. Right? Now you're questioning. "I wonder if this thing can protect me." (whining tone) "I don't know." (sound of slapping across the head) Sitting duck. Target practice. That's you. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). "I don't know if I can handle any more." Well, you can. The Bible says you can. "I'm about to get overwhelmed." All right. Don't believe the Bible then. Just crawl out from under that shield, and put that "x" right there, and, "Shoot me!" Or you can just depend upon the truths of God that you have come to know. That's the shield of faith that protects you no matter. You don't have any explanation for what you're going through. You don't have any good reasoning from God or anyone else as to what you're facing.

I don't think Job would have been satisfied with much of the explanations he got - besides the accusations he got. Nothing satisfied him. He wanted to hear it from God, and when he heard it from God, he humbled himself very quickly, and he found out in the end that God was good. But God doesn't promise you explanations. He just promises you deliverance and goodness and blessing, and that He's for you, that He's not against you, that the enemy won't have the upper hand, that greater is He who is in you, that there's a way out here. I don't know what it is, but when people give up and give out, it's because they have absolutely come to the conclusion that God doesn't tell the truth. It's like the children of Israel who get to Kadesh Barnea after 430 years in bondage, and then they have nine months of plagues where God says, "Look at Me. I'll make muscles. See who I am? Follow Me." And then six weeks of travel out to Mount Sinai, and

then a year of sitting and learning who God is, and then a twelve-day journey over to Kadesh Barnea, and somehow in that twelve days, they forget everything they learned and decide that God's not worth trusting. And by the time these guys come back six weeks later (the spies), the majority opinion is - God can't be trusted. And they give up. Well, they're not hiding behind any shield of faith. They're just getting destroyed. Why bother to go to church and study your Bible and pray when you don't believe what God says? It's self-destructive. It's foolish. Then admit to the fact you're having a hard time believing God, and start there, then, and then deal with that.

C. He is our hiding place

We always want to wield our sword, but you can't swing at flaming arrows. You hide from flaming arrows. You take cover, and you wait, resting in the truth you know well, behind that big shield of faith, and even some who are hooked together with others who have faith. Which is why David, when he began to write those beautiful psalms of prayer and worship, in fear and anxiety, he writes of the Lord, "You are my hiding place. You're my shelter." So He is for us. Listen to what he wrote in Psalm 91. This is David writing (verses 1-10), "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.' Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling." That's a pretty cool psalm. Put that one in memory. "They may fall right and left, but it ain't gettin' near me. I've made God my hiding place, my shield." Get behind the shield. Get behind the shield. All of our Christian life is an act of believing anyway, isn't it? "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Paul says to the Ephesian church and to us in particular now, "Believe God. Everything you know of Him, believe Him. And when things don't make sense, and when you can't explain, rather than jumping to the conclusion God doesn't love you, God doesn't care, God's against you and not for you, and buying the enemy's lies, go back and buy the truth, and sit under it. Hide under it! Hang on to it until this thing passes."

We had a woman come in, maybe twenty years ago - it's been a long time. I'm sure she wouldn't mind me telling you this story. But she had been married for twenty-five years, and that day that she came in to see me, her husband had left her for another woman. Twenty-five years, they'd been married. Two days later, her son was arrested for the third time for dealing drugs. And that Friday, she was fired from her job. All happened in a matter of six days. So she came in, and she said, "I've still got two young kids living at home. I don't know how I'm going to make ends meet. What should I do?" I said, "Well let me see if Pastor Lyle is available." (Laughing)

I didn't say that, but to be honest with you, I had nothing to tell her to fix that - except this, "I think you're just going to have to trust the Lord, and see what He's going to do next." It's not a copout. I really don't know what the answer is to that. I can certainly understand how she felt. So my counsel to her was, "Get under the shield until the shooting stops. Just hang on. God's doing something. It doesn't look good from any perspective. Nobody's going to stand with you and disagree that your life sucks right now, or it seems to. Everything seems to be wrong. But God hasn't vacated the throne. I can't explain to you. I'm not going to try to justify what He's doing. I'm not going to try to help you to understand that God has to deal with your life somehow. I have no idea what He's doing. I just know He's good, He's for you, and He hasn't quit being all of those things." So I said to her, "Whatever you know about God, whatever He has taught you, who He is to you, who you are to Him - over these years - hang on to all of that right now, and wait. I can't give you an explanation. There's no exercise to make you feel better. There's no answer why God would allow these things. I don't have a single Scripture to take the edge off. No idea! But I'll tell you what. You've got to hang on to what you know about God. That's where your life is." And that's what this shield is. You've got to duck and cover. See, it's in the Bible. Duck and cover. It's right here. Let the Lord raise up the standard.

And it does seem like when these things come our way that Satan will always use the onslaught to try to hurl accusations at us about God's character and about His love and to question His ways. Yet it is our faith that is necessary when the foundation becomes shaken. The root of my faith lies in what God has said, not in the circumstances that I face. The Word doesn't change; circumstances change. I'll feel better if I have a burrito. Not sure it's better for me, but I'll feel better. Every time. There's never been a time when I didn't feel better after eating a burrito. (Laughing) God never changes. He's just always faithful, right? He's faithful today. If you're good today, you've been faithful, "Oh, I've been praying! God loves me today." Oh, he loved you yesterday when you were an absolute idiot. When you weren't helpful at all, when you were just defiant, He loved you then. He doesn't change.

For this lady in counseling that had gone through the loss of a husband's love, and her son was incarcerated, and her job was gone, and she had kids at home, her primary need was not how she was going to deal with an unfaithful husband. Her primary need was not how she was going to deal with a son in prison or where the money was coming for next month's rent. All those are important. But her primary need, at this point, was to resolve that God was still on her side and that His Word could still be trusted and that He would be faithful still, that He wasn't leaving, that He wasn't forsaking her, that every need would be met by Him. Either that's true or it's not, and if it's not, then let's all go down to the bar. But if it's so, then let's not leave that place of relationship with Him. You have to sometimes just hang on. Right? And this is one of those hang on kind of deals. We need the shield of faith.

The Just Shall Live By Faith

A. These six little words change our lives

"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). Isn't that what it says? Surprise attacks are defined by the word "surprise." They're surprises. They arrive when everything seems

wonderful. They'll turn a dream into a nightmare, forcing you quickly to sit up and duck. Six little words. You find them in Habakkuk 2:4, in Galatians 3:11, in Hebrews 10:38, "The just shall live by faith." It is the answer to every question Satan will throw your way in an emergency. It is the solution for every attack that you face from time to time. "The just shall live by faith." Even when the enemy sarcastically asks you if God is a comedian. "Boy, does He think He's funny?" No.

B. Faith may require sitting and waiting for deliverance to come

The escape that God most often provides for us is this shield that will keep us from being mortally wounded; just get back there and wait. Hang on! Because all of Satan's efforts are designed to undermine God's authority in your life. That's what he would like to do. So, in trusting God, the enemy is defeated. He can't move. He's got no place to turn. He keeps throwing stuff at you, and you keep saying, "I'm standing on this - what I know about God, the things that I'm just established in." And the only way to stay safe behind the shield is to hang on in faith with what has been established in your life; which is why Peter said, and I think we studied it just a couple of weeks ago, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Gulp down. Wasn't that the word? So, "Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world" (1 Peter 5:9). Defensive shield. Get behind there. "This is the victory that has overcome the world," John writes at ninety years old (1 John 5:4), "our faith." Sometimes we just have to live by faith. Look, when you're under this kind of attack, you don't want to go, "Well, I want to start a ministry." No you don't. You just want to hang on. "I think I'm going to the mission field." Just hang on! "Can I get into ushers?" No!! You can just hang on.

C. We turn to our Lord and find shelter

Paul, when he talked to the Romans about faith, defining the kind of faith that pleased God, and used Abraham's life as an example, said he "was not weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform" (Romans 4:19-21). That's the hiding stuff you want to take on, you know? You want to look this stuff right in the face and go, "God is going to get me through this." And God is able, and He is faithful, and you can go from the depth of despair to the pinnacle of victory even though, from an outward standpoint, humanly it looks like it's an impossibility. But when you stand by faith, human reasoning sometimes doesn't help. I just have to trust God. And people say, "Well that's stupid. You'd better do something more than that." I can't do more than that. I have to trust Him.

So, when the Lord said to Abraham (there in Genesis 15:1), who was complaining about his lot and how he didn't have a child yet, He said, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." "I'll be your shield. Stand behind Me." It's always a good place. In front of the Lord is scary. Behind the Lord is very safe, isn't it? Or David writes in Psalm 46:1,

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Or the psalmist writes in Psalm 84:11 that "the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

So sometimes you have to just get behind the shield. You get instant protection. You get complete protection. There's nothing else you need to do. It isn't like, "Let me figure this out and call everybody." No. Just hide. Sometimes the best way out is just to hide. "Lord, I'm just going to let You fix this and handle this." You might want to go back and read 2 Chronicles 20. There are thirty verses there about Jehoshaphat's battle and saying to the Lord, "I'm so overwhelmed with what I see, and it looks like we don't stand a chance. We're just sitting ducks, and they're going to wipe us out. We don't even know where to turn at this point. We don't know who to look to." And the Lord, there in 2 Chronicles 20, begins to make promises not only to Jehoshaphat but to the people, and He says some wonderful things to them as Jehoshaphat is facing the Ammonites and the Moabites, and they're all kind of leaning in, and, "It looks like we're not going to make it." And the Lord said, "Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's" (verse 15). "And you won't have to do anything in this battle. Just look to Me." Sometimes it's the best advice. It's not a bailout. It's just survival, isn't it? And then you grow.

So, you got yourself one of these? If not, build one in the backyard. Go sit under it every once in a while. Practice.

Conclusion

Next week, we'll look at the helmet of salvation. This will protect your noggin. Next week, we're going after your noggin.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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