

I. Introduction

- A. Are you ready to get into the Word? I have good news for you today.
 - 1. *"Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."* (Ephesians 6:16)
- B. Today is part 10 in our series the Christian in Complete Armor
- C. My title today is:
 - 1. **The Shield of Faith**
- D. The context here is a war. It is as spiritual war. We're all in it. We can't avoid it.
- E. And that is why God gave you armor, so you can win every tug of war.
- F. So now, I want to mash up a story into this message.

II. The Fiery Serpents

- A. There's an amazing account in Numbers 21 about the children of Israel. They are in the wilderness — which is their own choice — and they are as usual, complaining. Which is always a mark that faith has gone poof.
- B. They are bitter. They are angry. They are unfaithful. So...
 - 1. *"So the LORD sent [unleashed] fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died."* (Numbers 21:6)
- C. So let me point out that the word that is translated "sent" doesn't exactly mean that. The Hebrew word is *shalach*. It means to set free, unleash, or to let go.
- D. God had his hand of protection on the people. This was grace. He was holding back the evil, protecting them from danger, and blockading them from fiery serpents. But when they abused that grace again and again, he lifted his hand of protection and gave them what they asked for, a life without the intervention of God.
- E. And immediately the Pain Machine of earth had its way. And in came fiery serpents.
- F. So they're sorry, of course, and they run to Moses. Help us! Help us! Pray for us!
- G. So Moses prayed for them, and God gave him some very strange instructions. Make a bronze serpent, put it on a pole, and stand it up in the middle of the camp. Tell everyone who has been bitten by a serpent to come and look at the serpent, and they will live.
- H. It's kind of ludicrous, don't you think? Can you imagine the conversations in all the tents? What? Look at a bronze serpent and live? Look and live is crazy!
- I. So this...
 - 1. *"So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at [unto] the bronze serpent, he lived."* (Numbers 21:9)
- J. But Moses states a powerful truth in the Hebrew here. The only way you would drag your snake bitten self to look at that serpent was faith. You either believed this would work (even a little) or not.
- K. But the preposition isn't at... whoever looked at the bronze serpent lived. No. It's unto... looking unto the bronze serpent. That's means faith. That means trust.
 - 1. Same thing here:
 - a) *"Look to [unto] Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."* (Isaiah 45:22)
 - 2. Trust me. Believe in me. And be saved.
- L. Moses is saying that salvation from snake bites came to the one who believed enough to just look at the bronze snake lifted up for all to see.
- M. One thousand five hundred years later, Jesus told a religious man...
 - 1. *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:14-15)
- N. Jesus said "I am the bronze serpent..." bronze, because bronze combines two metals, and Jesus combines two natures. Serpent because serpent indicates sin, and Jesus was made sin for us to die the death penalty we deserved. Lifted up because the bronze serpent was lifted up on a pole and Jesus was lifted up on a cross. And in both cases, one look of faith was all it took to be saved. Look at live, brother. Look and live sister. Look to Jesus Christ and live.
- O. Faith.

III. The Shield

- A. *"Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."* (Ephesians 6:16)
- B. So this verse has two illustrations that go with faith.
 - 1. The shield. The fiery darts.
- C. So I'll talk about those two illustrations, and then I hope you're ready, because we're doing a deep dive into faith.
- D. Let's start with the shield. The Roman soldier was equipped with one of two shields. A small round one, and a big rectangular one.
- E. The small round shield was called a buckler.
- F. But that's not what Paul means here.
- G. The word here means the big rectangular shield. The Greek word for this is *thureos*, which literally means door, because that's what this shield looked like. In fact, the ancient writer Homer explains that soldiers would use their shields as doors to block the entrance to the houses they were staying in during war.
- H. The *thureos* was four feet high and two and a half feet wide.
- I. It was made of wood, and it was covered with leather. We'll come back to this leather in a minute. It had straps for the soldier to hold it.
- J. The shield also had hooks on the sides, on the top, and the bottom.
- K. A company of Roman soldiers could stand in rows.
 - 1. The front row could hook their shields together. This would make an impenetrable wall against arrows and spears.

2. The back rows could lift their shields over their heads, and hook them together too.
3. The whole company was like a giant turtle moving forward... All the arrows and spears and rocks that rained down on them would just bounce off.
- L. By naming this specific shield, you get the idea that this is a heavily armed soldier.
- M. This shield is armor number four.
- N. Armor pieces one, two, and three attach to your body. You wear them... the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the boots of the gospel of peace.
- O. But this one, you don't wear, you carry. That's why the verse begins with the words, "Above all." The shield covers the first three defenses. Faith is a defense for your defenses. Faith is the double protection in this great spiritual war.
- P. And now we see a protection from what.

IV. The Fiery Darts

- A. The shield of faith is how you quench all the fiery darts of the devil.
- B. Ancient warriors dipped the tips of their arrows in something sticky and flammable, like tar. They set it on fire and shot.
- C. So this is a double danger. If the tip doesn't penetrate you, you still have to deal with the fire.
- D. But have no fear, if you have this shield. Because the leather covering on the shield could withstand the fire, unlike the wood beneath it.
- E. In this illustration, notice who's shooting the flaming arrows... these are the fiery darts of the wicked one.
- F. Do you realize that the devil is firing flaming arrows at you all the time?
 1. Why does Scripture liken them to arrows? Because they come from a distance and they pierce.
 2. Why flaming arrows? Because once they pierce, they spread.
- G. An arrow pierces which is bad enough, but a fire spreads, which makes it worse. What are these arrows?
- H. For now, let me give you a technical definition: all the bad stuff. That's the flaming arrows. All the bad stuff.
- I. Now it's time to talk about faith. It's probably one of the top 2 or 3 words used by Christians.
- J. We really need to understand this word. The one thing that shields you from the fiery darts is faith.
- K. So, now I want to talk about the one thing that makes all the other things easy.

V. The Anatomy of Faith

A. Faith has a subject and an object.

1. When scholars analyze faith, they divide it into two main parts:
 - a) **The subject of faith — That's the person doing the believing.**
 - b) **The object part — That's the thing or person that's actually believed.**
2. So, let's take the simple sentence...I believe in Jesus. The subject of faith is I. The object of faith is Jesus.
3. So faith means someone believing in someone or something. The one who believes is the subject of faith. The something that is believed is called the object of faith. Got it?
 - a) *"knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."* (Galatians 2:16)
4. This is super important.
5. The great enemy Satan, has worked out a whole lot of strategies against faith by confusing the subject and object.
 - a) One main strategy is to put anything but Christ Crucified as the object of faith. It's doesn't matter who you believe, just believe in something. For religious people, it's good works. For secular people, it's the glories of human nature.
 - b) Another strategy is to mix the objects. A little bit of this and a little bit of that. A little bit of good works and a little bit of Jesus. A little bit of morality and a little bit of church. I'll believe in Jesus on Sundays and Mammon on Mondays and Horoscopes on Tuesdays.
 - c) Another strategy is to make you the object of your own faith. I believe in me, myself, and I.
 - d) Another really big one is to remove the object altogether. Just believe. Just have faith. Believe in what? Nobody. Just believe.
 - e) One more satanic strategy is to say that only subjects who are predestined by God can have faith. Wrong and no. Faith is universal. Everyone has faith, not just the so-called elect. The problem isn't the subject, the problem is the wrong objects... they're believing all right, but in anyone and anything except Jesus.
6. All of this is satanic. And all of this part of the battle.
7. When those fiery serpents bit the people, and Moses said Look and live... who was the subject? The snake-bitten person. Who was the object? The serpent lifted on the pole. Put your faith there and live.
8. So far so good?

B. Faith is only as good as its object.

1. So let's take this sentence.
 - a) John believes in the Tooth Fairy. The subject is... John. The object is... the Tooth Fairy.
2. How strong, how reliable, how real is the object?
3. Not so much. What if it's faith in Santa Claus? What if it's faith in Zeus or Zoroaster or the million gods of Hinduism? Or faith in Atheism? Or faith in horoscopes and fortune tellers?
4. Faith is only as good as its object. The devil attacks this too. He says, Just believe. You say, Believe in what? The devil says, Anything. It doesn't matter. But it does matter... because...
5. If the object of faith is unreal, or unreliable, or non-sensical, or absurd, you can believe with all your might and it still won't do you any good.

a) It's not the sincerity of the subject, it's the reliability of the object that matters most.

6. So when those snakes bit the people, and they were called to trust in the uplifted bronze serpent, only one thing mattered.
7. Was that object of faith sufficient to save them or not?
 - a) And Jesus says, I am too. My death on the cross for you is not only sufficient, but all sufficient and hyper sufficient... more than enough to remove the venom of sin and to give you eternal life. Look and live. Look unto me and be saved.
8. And it was. Because faith is only as good as its object. Now, let's go next level.

C. Faith is non-meritorious.

1. We believe in non-meritorious saving faith. Nobody gets a merit badge for believing in someone else.
2. There is no virtue in act of faith itself (the subject of faith). All the virtue, and all the merit, lies in the object of faith.
 - a) There's no virtue or merit in the subject. All the virtue and merit is in the object (Jesus).
3. May I illustrate?
 - a) I believe in this chair. When I stand beside the chair, I'm working, and the chair is not working.
 - b) But when I believe in the chair, and sit down in it, I stop working, and the chair starts working.
 - c) In fact, sitting in the chair is awesome. I'm am no longer holding up my weight, the chair is holding my weight. If you want to give a merit badge for somebody doing a good job, you give it to the chair.
 - d) The moment I sit down, I shift from working to resting.
4. I hope you're getting this, because there's a really important statement in theology.
 - a) Faith is non-meritorious.
5. So what?
6. Here's so what. When you understand that faith is non-meritorious, you protect grace.
 - a) Faith is not a good work. Faith is not an effort. Faith is the cessation of effort. It's not a work, it's an unwork.
 - b) The subject of faith never gets a pat on the back for faith. The pat on the back goes to the object of faith... to Jesus. HE saved you.
7. Faith did not save you, Jesus did. Faith did not die on the cross for your sins. Jesus did. Faith did not shed any blood, pay any price, earn any praise. All of that was courtesy of a crucified Savior.
8. So the sneaking conniving devil attacks this, and makes faith itself meritorious. Oh, he says, have faith in faith because faith is all you need, and it's all you need because faith has merit.
9. Lie!
10. That's the death of grace. That's the death of by grace through faith.
11. Faith is a little tiny zero resting its weight on a great big 100.
 - a) *"Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace..."* (Romans 4:16)
12. The subject of faith isn't good; the object of faith is good, and that's why faith and grace go together so perfectly.

D. Saving faith is exclusive.

1. Being saved means having one and only one object of faith: Jesus Christ, who died for your sins and rose again.
2. It's not Jesus plus... It's not Jesus and... It's just Jesus.
3. Eternal Salvation excludes every other hope from its object. If you're believing in Jesus plus your baptism, you're not saved. If you're believing in Jesus plus your morality, you're not saved.
 - a) *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" (John 14:6)*
4. That's was exclusive as it gets.
5. So, here's a definition of saving faith:
 - a) **SAVING FAITH means claiming by personal choice, and relying exclusively upon the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross for my salvation.**
6. The finished work is everything. We don't talk about it enough. In his dying breaths, Jesus cried out one word, FINISHED (John 19:30)
7. That means that his death was the only death needed. His condemnation, his damnation, his punishment, his suffering, his receiving our sins and shame, his guilt, his everything is all that is needed.
8. Faith in the finished work of Christ is saving faith.
 - a) Lifted up was he to die, IT IS FINISHED was his cry, Now in heaven, exalted high! Hallelujah! What a Savior!
9. You can't look two ways. You can't be double-minded here. You're looking to Christ, or to something else. There is no other antidote to the venom of sin. No salvation anywhere but him.
 - a) **So, the one and only efficacious object of faith in the Christian life is Jesus Christ and his finished work on our behalf... Faith Alone in Christ Alone.**
10. This is faith.
11. There is nothing complex about the subject and everything complex about the object because the object has to be sufficient and efficacious, and if you have Jesus, he is.
12. When Paul urges you to cover your life with the shield of faith, what exactly does that mean?

VI. The Shield of Faith

- A. So, whether you have fiery darts coming at you... which is Satan's fault... or fiery serpents... which is your own fault, the solution is the same.
- B. The shield of faith.
- C. Faith.
- D. Keep faith with God. Believe in the power of Christ. Believe in the reality of your salvation. Trust him. Turn to him. Look to him, again and again and again.

- E. Because the devil is fighting tooth and nail to make you turn anywhere but Christ. He wants you to lose faith. He wants you to forget faith. He wants you to despise faith and to say it doesn't work, or it's too hard for you to hold on.
- F. Here's where I want to blow your mind a little, and where I want to get off the same old track of how most people interpret the shield of faith.
- G. So let's look at this Scripture...
 - 1. *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."* (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- H. Same verse, I'm going to add my comments and reframe this thing.
 - 1. *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [messed up people who kept faith anyway], let us lay aside every weight [needless additions to faith], and the sin [hostilities from Satan's Pain Machine] which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance [ongoing faith] the race [agōn, struggle or gauntlet] that is set before us [by Satan], looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him [by God] endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."* (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- I. Here is where I made my own breakthrough while I've been studying for this message.
- J. I have always thought that the shield of faith meant a certain kind of faith: you have to have faith that God will handle your problem, regardless of the outcome.
- K. In other words, when you're talking about the shield of faith, most of us think about faith in God's ability to handle the problem, faith in God's presence to deal with the situation... faith in God's providence to bring good out of evil and all that.
- L. In other words, when the fiery darts are flying thick and fast, the OBJECT of faith in that moment is God's ability to handle the fiery darts.
- M. We've already talked about Saving Faith. Now, I'm going to call this Situational Faith.
 - 1. **SITUATIONAL FAITH mean confidence that God will come through in this specific situation.**
- N. This is a good faith. This is a real faith. I believe in this and preach it.
 - 1. Believe God in this specific situation for this specific solution, and God will quench all the fiery darts.
- O. But I no longer think that Situational Faith is the point of the shield of faith.
 - 1. So you're sick, and you've got to believe that God will make you well? What if you don't believe?
 - 2. You're out of work and now you have to lift up faith that God will pay your bills? What if you don't have that faith?
 - 3. You're suffer depression, or you feel deep anxiety, or you struggle with sexual addiction or any addiction... and now you have to have faith that God will fix it, reverse it, deliver you, and all that?
 - a) Listen that's all true. I believe in that.
- P. But that's not the shield of faith.
- Q. But the precise object of faith is NOT that God's going to fix the problem that the fiery darts send your way.
- R. What is the precise object of faith when hostilities come? When fiery darts are all around and fiery serpents have slithered into your tent?
- S. The precise object of faith in any and every trial is... Jesus Christ, crucified and risen again...
- T. And I'm going to call this SAVIOR FAITH.
 - 1. **SAVIOR FAITH means going back to Jesus and his Cross to remember again the love of God and the enormous cost of the grace that saved you...**
- U. I'm saying that this faith is **the shield of faith**.
 - 1. **SAVIOR FAITH means going back to Jesus and his Cross to remember again the love of God and the enormous cost of the grace that saved you... this is the faith of the Shield of Faith.**
- V. Go back to the Cross. Go back to Calvary's Love. Go back to "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so." Go back to the day your faith began, and remember Him.
 - 1. Go back to the forgiveness of sins through the sacrificial death of Christ.
 - 2. Go back to the assurance that every blessing is yours and yours in abundance, for you're a joint heir with him.
 - 3. Go back to that day when the Holy Spirit flooded in and sealed you in union with Christ forever.
 - 4. Go back to that power that sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace.
 - 5. Go back to the promise that nothing in all creation can separate you from the love of God.
 - 6. Go back to that victory when God in Christ more-than-conquered Satan and sin and death and depression and despair and every dark cloud hiding the radiance of his smiling face.
- W. Look unto Jesus. Looking unto the Savior.
- X. Look and live.
- Y. Look and live again and again.
- Z. Look to him, and simply say,
 - 1. Thank you Lord, for saving my soul. Thank you Lord, for making me whole. Thank you Lord, for giving to me, Thy great salvation, so rich and free.
- AA. And when your heart is so heavy you can't stand it, and when you're so anxious, and frustrated, and afraid... let faith grow by simply remembering the face of Jesus, and his shed blood, and his Cross, and a love that will not let you go, and a glory-land coming with no more sorrows and no more tears.
- BB. That is the shield of faith that all the hosts of hell combined can never get through.
- CC. How to make that deeper, stronger, and broader we'll save for next time.