

## How The Shield Works

***Ephesians 6:16 KJV** Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

***Ephesians 6:10-19 WEYMOUTH** In conclusion, strengthen yourselves in the Lord and in the power which His supreme might imparts. **[11]** Put on the complete armour of God, so as to be able to stand firm against all the stratagems of the Devil. **[12]** For ours is not a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with the despotisms, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world--the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare. **[13]** Therefore put on the complete armour of God, so that you may be able to stand your ground on the day of battle, and, having fought to the end, to remain victors on the field. **[14]** Stand therefore, first fastening round you the girdle of truth and putting on the breastplate of uprightness **[15]** as well as the shoes of the Good News of peace-- a firm foundation for your feet. **[16]** And besides all these take the great shield of faith, on which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the Wicked one; **[17]** and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. **[18]** Pray with unceasing prayer and entreaty on every fitting occasion in the Spirit, and be always on the alert to seize opportunities for doing so, with unwearied persistence and entreaty on behalf of all God's people, **[19]** and ask on my behalf that words may be given to me so that, outspoken and fearless, I may make known the truths (hitherto kept secret) of the Good News—*

### **I. Introduction—Persistence Is A Must!**

Robert the Bruce was king of Scotland from 1306 to 1329. Early in his reign, King Edward I of England invaded his nation, defeated his army, and forced him into hiding. While on the run, Robert the Bruce took refuge in a cave.

Completely disheartened, the Scottish king lay by a fire in the cave, ready to resign himself to complete defeat and the loss of his kingdom. But then, in the flickering firelight, he noticed a spider on the cave wall, spinning a web. The spider repeatedly attempted to secure the web, then failed, attempted again, then failed. Finally, the spider was able to anchor the web, making it strong and secure.

In the persistence of the spider, the Scottish king saw a metaphor of his own struggle against the English invader. He decided he would not allow himself to be defeated by past failures he had to continue the fight for Scottish freedom. Robert the Bruce left his cave, led his troops across the field of battle, and defeated the English invaders at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. He continued to persevere for the next fourteen years until he finally won Scottish independence in 1328. (From Ray Steadman, *Spiritual Warfare*)

- Being a spiritual and godly man in this generation is a war that is unceasing.

**Thomas Manton**—A Christian's life is a warfare and we cannot discharge the duties of it without a battle or conflict. . . we must fight for the good that we would do; they that think this unnecessary scarcely know what Christianity is.

There are three primary battlegrounds that will require our vigilance:

- The World
- The Flesh
- The Devil

Our faith is crucial in the battle that we carry out on a daily basis. Temptations arise in the path of every man who is called to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Temptations can drive us to our knees in prayer so that we may gain comfort from the Lord in the midst of those battles.
- Temptations are necessary to us because it tempers the edge of pride from us in being proud of what we have or conceited of more that we have.
- Temptations help conform us to the image of Jesus because as He was tempted, we will be tempted. No disciple is above his Lord.
- Temptations bring patience to us. We can be fierce and severe on the failings of others but when we are brought to mind that those same temptations could capsize our own soul it fosters compassion in us.

There is great value and strength that comes from being in the battle! You may not enjoy it when it bears down on you but after the fact we may understand that God was working out things in our own life.

## II. Ephesus 6

Four times in this passage Paul uses the word “stand/withstand” which has the same root in the Greek. He uses it in Ephesians 6:11, 13, and 14. He used it in a way that helps us to know that spiritual warring is a great resistance.

***Ephesians 4:27 KJV Neither give place to the devil.***

We cannot afford to give the devil a place in our lives. He does not just give us this instruction without any parameters. Paul is instructional when he tells the church exactly how they are not to give place to the devil.

***Ephesians 4:25-26 KJV Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. [26] Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:***

***Ephesians 4:28 KJV Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.***

While this is not all inclusive, Paul was clear that we can give ground to the devil through:

- Lying
- Excessive anger
- Stealing
- Laziness

The devil will use every trick, wile, deception, and tool he can to get us to fall. We have been filled with the Spirit but there is also a responsibility to mortify the flesh and not give it any room to lead us about into sinful practices.

***Colossians 3:5 KJV Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:***

**Romans 6:12-13 KJV** *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. [13] Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

#### **A. Above All. . .**

**Ephesians 6:16 KJV** *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

There are some who have mistakenly come to believe the shield of faith is the most important of all the implements of war because of the phrase “above all.” They may even infer that all the other pieces of armor aren’t even necessary.

Yet from Ephesians 6:11 we find the command to put on the whole armor of God. We are to be fully suited, immersed, and totally covered by this uniform of God’s armor.

The words “above all” really give us the meaning that we are to be able to position the faith over all of the other pieces of armor. Your faith is to be out front where it can cover all that we have to face.

We can also note that the word “taking” from the Greek meaning gives us the understanding that we can take it up in our hand or it means to pick it back up again. This plainly means that our shield can be picked up and laid down.

There is a further meaning that needs to be stressed and that would be the idea that your faith can be laid down and discarded. Paul was encouraging us that we must pick up our faith because it is crucial for us in the battle.

A Roman soldier would have never gone into battle without his sword. It was a guarantee that he could have some protection from the flying arrows and deadly darts the enemy would shoot at him.

Your faith is ever so important! Far too often, saints lay down their faith and try to face the enemy of their soul without an active, vibrant, alive faith that helps them to be over-comers.

**1 Timothy 1:18-19 KJV** *This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; [19] Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:*

Faith that gets put away will soon lead to a place where that a shipwreck will take place in our spiritual life.

## **B. The Shield of Faith**

**Ephesians 6:16 KJV** *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

The shield that the Roman soldiers were equipped with was called a *thureos*. It was about the size of a door and it even resembled a door. There were smaller shields that were round and were called an *aspis*. But Paul did not use this word; he used *thureos* which was the large shield.

The shield had a wood frame that had leather that had been sewn and then pulled very tight over the frame. The soldier had the daily responsibility to anoint his shield with oil. The reason that he did this was because the leather would remain supple and resistant to the piercing attacks of weapons that came from the battle.

A shield that had been neglected and not anointed on a regular basis would deteriorate and the soldier could very easily lose his life because of it.

Because the shield is representative of our faith, this analogy tells us that our faith needs, in fact it requires frequent fresh anointings of the Holy Ghost.

There is nothing like a fresh touch of the Holy Ghost poured on your faith to keep it from becoming hard, stiff, and brittle. If we ignore our faith and allow it to constantly stay in a condition of neglect it will never be developed as God intended.

Faith that is ignored will always break and fall to pieces during a confrontation with the enemy. We cannot go on the experiences of the past. They may provide fond

memories and warm feelings but we have to seek after an anointing of the Spirit of God regularly.

- Past camp-meetings won't work.
- Past youth camps won't work.
- Prayer meetings from the past won't work.
- Old commitments won't work.
- Past victories won't be enough.

There is nothing like a fresh anointing that saturates our weary spirits.

A. W. Tozer implored the church to maintain that fresh anointing. He preached a sermon one time on backsliding and said that there are things that take place when a man begins to backslide.

- He loses interest in communion with God.
- He becomes bored with church.
- He is embarrassed by the zeal that other Christians display.
- He is embarrassed when things of God are brought up in a social setting.
- He assumes a critical spirit toward everything related to the Kingdom of God.
- He has a tendency to become professional in his relationship with God.
- He gets tired of giving and he soon stops because it has become a mere habit for him.

Preachers can even be guilty of backsliding and not even be aware of it when they are just going through the motions. How can a preacher know if he is backsliding?

- He no longer preaches with conviction any longer.
- He no longer preaches what he used to preach in the past because he is embarrassed by his old heart-felt convictions.
- His prayer life has become functional and that of duty.
- His ministry has gotten far more social than it has spiritual.
- His schedule is filled with the insignificant instead of the magnificent.
- He no longer gives himself to deep thinking about the things of God.
- He no longer muses over the old hymns that resonate with deep theology.
- He no longer pursues unction and instead pursues eloquence.

There has to be a fresh anointing of the Holy Ghost in our spiritual walk!

### C. To Quench All the Fiery Darts

*Ephesians 6:16 KJV Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

#### 1. The Fiery Darts

The darts of the devil are terrible to contend with. The arrows and darts that the enemy hurls in our direction aren't just normal arrows. Paul noted the way that the battles raged in the Roman times and knew that the devils attacks were just as deadly.

Warfare in ancient times led soldiers to do one of two things with the arrows. First, they would take the arrows and dip them in pitch and set them on fire and shoot them at their enemies. When the burning arrow hit the target, the pitch would splatter the fire and ignite whatever was around it. Secondly, they would dip the arrow in a poisonous fluid of differing types so that it would poison the soldier that it hit.

Paul noted that this was the way the devil worked. He would use his wiles and methods to destroy whatever he could.

**William Gurnall**—Temptation doth not fall on us as a ball of fire on ice or snow, but as a spark on tinder, or as lightning on a thatched roof, which presently is on a flame.

The devil sends temptations that have a fiery quality about them. He will send temptations that try to draw us in.

*James 1:13-16 KJV Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: [14] But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. [15] Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. [16] Do not err, my beloved brethren.*

So before you set out on a semester of sensuality, before you go lower to feel higher, before you trade in godly character for a hip distortion, consider these wise words from an unlikely source:

**Oscar Wilde**—The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. . . .Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in search for new sensation. The paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion.

I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace.

That is the way the devil works. He causes a maddening to come over the soul so that we are literally without the covering of our faith.

Watch out for the fiery darts:

- Take heed of being the devil's tool to put sinful corruption on someone else.
- Take care in becoming overconfident to think you cannot fall.
- Take care in knowing that the darts he sends are swift and appear on us suddenly.
- Take care in understanding that the darts he shoots come from unexpected places—the errant words of a friend and the influence of a boss at work.

These arrows that are shot by the devil and have a wounding and killing nature to them. The devil hates us! If any sinner or backslider could ever understand that this world and the flesh does not love them it would change the nature of the battle.

## **2. The Quenching Nature of the Shield**

But Paul affirms to us that the shield has a quenching nature to it. It literally has the ability to put out the effect of the arrows.



There are some who are quite overconfident in their walk with the Lord. There is a Scripture that gives us some direction about that.

***1 Peter 5:5 KJV*** Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and **be clothed with humility**: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

The shield of faith quenches the fiery darts when we are clothed with humility and realize that our fight will never be successful if we wage it on our own.

The shield quenches the fiery darts when we follow the directive of John:

***1 John 2:15-17 KJV*** Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **[16]** For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. **[17]** And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The shield of faith is rendered ineffective when we love this world! In fact our whole Christian walk is paralyzed by too much contact with this world.

The shield of faith quenches the fire darts of the wicked by helping the saint to see far beyond this world. It takes the mist out of the way and helps us to see through sin and its horrible effect.

***Hebrews 11:24-26 KJV*** By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; **[25]** Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; **[26]** Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Faith has a piercing eye and can see much further than a carnal and unspiritual eye.

The shield of faith quenches the fiery darts by taking away the fuel that feeds temptation. If you empty the lamp of its oil, it will go out. Pride is what fuels the

temptation because it appeals to us to be much more important than what we ought to be.

Those that drink a tall glass of self-importance before they go into the world every morning are particularly drawn into this trap. A humble man does not take this route because he is aware of what ultimately will come to pass:

***Psalms 73:17 KJV** Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.*

Faith says to us:

- If you had this entire world, it would not add to your height one inch in the eye of God.
- If you had the entire glory of this world, it would not satisfy your soul.
- If you had the crown of the world on your head, it would not last because there is a judgment awaiting all.

Perhaps one of the greatest ways that faith destroys the fiery darts is by showing us the exploits and actions of those who have gone on before us. Rather than defile their conscience and prostitute their souls, they looked to a higher calling and reward:

***Daniel 1:8 KJV** But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.*

***Hebrews 11:13 KJV** These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

***Hebrews 11:33-40 KJV** Whothrough faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, [34] Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. [35] Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: [36] And others had trial*

*of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: [37] They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; [38] (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. [39] And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: [40] God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

### **III. Conclusion—God Is My Shield**

Just to conclude this thought with one concept.

*Jude 1:3 KJV Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

Our faith is that body of doctrine that the early church taught and held to. But the Bible is also very clear that God is our shield.

*Psalms 3:3 KJV But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.*

*Psalms 28:7 KJV The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.*

*Psalms 33:20 KJV Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.*

There are other Scriptures that express this same thought of God being our shield. We take Him into the battle with us every day and it will assure us of reward in the end.