

## Ephesians 6:16-17

<sup>16</sup> With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.



The shield carried by the Roman soldier was large – about 4½ feet in height by 2½ feet in width. They were designed to be placed together as the soldiers advanced in formation, making almost a movable fort, often called the “tortoise formation.” This is a good picture of the church as a community, coming together to be strong in faith.

The shield had two layers, the first layer was leather which would be soaked in water. The back would be a heavier wood. A flaming arrow might pierce the first layer, but because of a lack of air between the two layers, it would be extinguished. The shield was used to fend off attacks to those areas not covered with other armor, carrying the soldier through the tight spots.

In the same way, faith carries us through those times when we don’t necessarily “feel” like a Christian, or when the darts of trials and temptations come our way. Not an easy, “blind” faith, but a deep assurance that you know something is true.

The object of our faith must always be trustworthy, otherwise our faith is not a shield. As Proverbs 30:5 says, *Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.*

Our faith is an overcoming faith! As 1 John 5:4 says, *Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*

Interestingly, Dr. Wernher von Braun, the guiding scientist in the development of our space program once said, “Man needs faith just as he needs food, water and air. With all the science in the world, we need faith in God.”

\*\*22. What are some things that we can do to strengthen our faith (make sure that our shield is ready)?

We also need to remember that Jesus is the source of our faith. Hebrews 12:2a says, *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.*

\*\* 23. How is Jesus the “author and perfecter of our faith”?

Psalm 7:10.... *My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.*

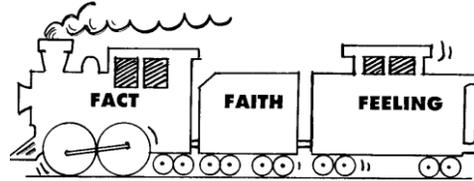
\*\*24. What does “taking up the shield of faith” mean to you?

<sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation,

This is where we start the Christian life, but it doesn't stop there. I remember back when this was a "thing", someone said, "Too many Christians go streaking around with *only* the helmet of salvation."

The Roman helmet was first of all protective of the head and neck against blows in hand-to-hand combat. Likewise, our spiritual helmet – our salvation – protects us from Satan's fatal blow, the threat of eternal death.

Notice that the helmet covers the head, not the heart. In the same way, our salvation is a matter of intellect – what we know – not just feelings.



If we are not assured of our salvation in our minds, we are vulnerable to attack

\*\*25. What would you say to someone who said that Christianity was "anti-intellectual"?

If you go into a construction area, you will probably see a sign that says: "HARD HATS REQUIRED." As Christians, we are all "under construction" so we need our helmets.

The first recorded attack of Satan in the Bible was on the mind of Eve. In commenting on that, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 11:3....*But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

\*\*26. In what ways could Satan attack our minds?

The helmet protecting our head (minds) is salvation. This is always the starting point. If you don't have a helmet, don't go into battle!

The "tenses" of salvation:

Salvation is in the past tense. 1 Peter 3:18 – *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit...*

Salvation is in and for the present. Ephesians 2:8-9 – *For it is by grace you are saved through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. {"are" is closer to the Greek than "have been"!}*

Salvation also refers to the future. Philippians 1:6 – *Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul also uses the armor imagery, and talks about the "future" nature of our salvation...*let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet...* Note the difference from the Ephesians passage: it is the HOPE of salvation (remember that "hope" in the Bible is a surety), and that is the future tense of salvation.

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The most effective way to “put on the helmet of salvation” is to so fill our minds with the assurance of our salvation and with positive things – things honoring to the Lord – that there will not be room for anything else.

Remember Philippians 4:8...*whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.*

<sup>17b</sup> ...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

This is the only offensive weapon listed. Also note that though an arrow can be shot or a spear thrown from a distance, with the sword, one must get “up close and personal”! Neither does it do any good for a soldier to meet the enemy and say, “I have a sword at home, you know.”

That is why the Psalmist said (119:11), *I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.* That way you always have it with you!

If we are to defend ourselves with God’s Word, we’ve got to grab hold of it...study it.... know it.... commit it to memory.

Why is it the “sword of the Spirit”? Because the Holy Spirit has been the source of the inspiration of Scripture, and the source of all that is true. Jesus said in John 14:26...*the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

Hebrews 4:12 tells us more about this sword.... *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

\*\*27. What do you think it means that “the word of God is living and active”?

We stage a “counterattack” against the devil whenever we proclaim the truths of the Bible.

Go again to Matthew 4:1-11. We see that at each temptation, Jesus quoted Scripture to counter Satan. This is a good example of how Scripture can be used as the sword of the Spirit – applying specific truths for specific needs. In Matthew 4:4, the word used is “gegraptai” – literally, “it stands written” – as if it is carved in stone, thus unchanging.

\*\*28. Do people ever try to change the word of God today?

Remember, as we saw last week, that in the temptation of Jesus, Satan also quoted Scripture, but wrongly and out of context. As Paul wrote to his young friend, Timothy...*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15, emphasis added)

And we need to be like the people of Berea who *examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.* (Acts 17:11)

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History has never recorded a more discordant, terror-filled and notorious end to a cult than the murder-suicide deaths of 910 people in the jungle of Guyana in 1978. One of the army men who saw that awful scene in Jonestown observed, "There were no Bibles!" If someone had just used their "sword," they would have known Jim Jones was greatly straying from the truth of God's Word!

One more apropos illustration:

When General George Patton's troops and tanks were engaged in a counter attack on the German forces under General Erwin Rommel, Patton is reported to have shouted in the thick of battle: "I read your book, Rommel! I read your book!" The book he was referring to was Infantry Attacks in which the famed "Desert Fox" carefully detailed his military strategy in World War 1. Having read it and knowing what to expect, Patton planned his moves accordingly. Satan has authored no book, but God has fully exposed our enemy's tactics in His Word. Study it, and you will be ready to do battle!

The church's Mission Study (using questions provided by the denomination) ask the question, How do you view the Bible? The possible answers were:

The Bible, when interpreted, contains God's word to us.

The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted historically, plus the Church's teachings.

The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in its historical context.

The Bible is a collection of ancient texts which reveal spiritual truths for all time.

The Bible is the word of God to be taken literally word for word. (Or, Other)

\*\*29. How would you answer this question and why? If "other" – what would you say?

*Warren Wiersbe's Prayer for the Armor of God:*

Father, thank you for the provision you have made for victory over Satan. Now, by faith, I put on the girdle of truth. May my life today be motivated by truth. Help me to maintain integrity.

By faith, I put on the breastplate of righteousness. May my heart love that which is righteous and refuse what is sinful. Thank you for the imputed righteousness of Christ.

By faith, I put on the shoes of peace. Help me to stand in Christ's victory today. Help me to be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker.

By faith, I take the shield of faith. May I trust you and your Word today and not add fuel to any of Satan's darts. Thank you that I can go into this day without fear.

By faith, I put on the helmet of salvation. May I remember today that Jesus is coming again. Help me to live in the future tense. Protect my mind from discouragement and despair.

By faith, I take the sword of the Spirit. Help me to remember your Word and to use it today.

Father, by faith I have put on the armor. May this be a day of victory.

Through Jesus Christ, my Savior and my Lord. Amen.