

Eph 6:16 The Shield of Faith

God never calls us to blind faith, only to believe the evidence that He has provided—to search it for ourselves, and realize that faith in God makes sense. Our faith is rooted in reality, not some vague hope, or unfounded belief. Biblical faith is evidence-based faith. In biblical terms, faith must always have a firm foundation. True biblical faith derives its power not from any strength inherent in faith itself but rather from the power of God, the object of that faith. Faith is merely the instrument that connects us to the utterly trustworthy and all-powerful God, who created the heavens and the earth and who made us for relationship with him. This is the faith of which Paul is speaking in our passage when he says, **“In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one”** (Eph. 6:16). He is not saying that faith has some remarkable defensive power against Satan, in and of itself. Rather, he is saying that faith protects us from Satan’s attacks because of what faith enables us to take hold of—the power and protection of God Himself.

The previously mentioned pieces of armor all had to be fastened to the body, but now believers are to take up “the shield of faith.” It is carried. This word for shield (scutum) comes originally from a word meaning “stone put up against a door to keep it shut. This word scutum was a large, broad shield of the romans, which were oblong, and shaped like a door and covered a man completely. That’s the word here—full protection--2 1/2 by 4 feet and was a hand’s breadth in thickness. The possession of the shield of resolute faith helps us stand firmly and resist the devil and his schemes. We just have to be serious about our faith, realizing that we are in a battle. 1 Peter 5:8-10 **8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 So resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brothers and sisters who are in the world.**

Faith in God is our Shield

This becomes clear when you look at statements about God being our shield in the OT. In Gen 15:1 the Lord tells Abraham, **“I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”** Proverbs 30:5 says: **“[God] is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”** This same theme is repeated many times in the psalms. For example, in Psalm 3:3 David says: **“You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.”** In Psalm 28:7 we read, **“The LORD is my strength and my shield.”** In Psalm 119:114 the psalmist says to the Lord, **“You are my hiding place and my shield.”** Psalm 91:3-6 **He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.** God himself is our shield; he is our refuge; he is our hiding place in the day of difficulty; his faithfulness will keep us safe when we are being shot at by arrows. But it is faith in God and His power to defend us that enables us to stand.

The Shield of Faith

But if the Old Testament tells us that God is our shield, why does Paul say that faith is our shield? Faith is the means by which we flee to God for refuge. It is how we cling to God and find in him comfort and protection in times of difficulty and distress. Clearly, a shield is vitally important to a soldier. It provides a blanket of protection. It is meant to be taken up in all circumstances. It is the first barrier against the enemy’s attack. Often, shields were painted with identifying marks; a Christian who takes up the shield of faith identifies himself as a foot soldier who serves the Commander of the Lord’s Hebrews 11:1 says, **“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”** Verse 6 stresses the importance of faith: **“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”** Satan’s attacks can sometimes cause us to doubt God. Faith prompts us to believe God. We give in to temptation when we believe what it has to offer is better than what God has promised. Faith reminds us that, though fulfillment of God’s promise may not be readily visible to us, God is true to His Word. When Satan attempts to plague us with doubt or entice us with instant gratification, faith recognizes the

deceptiveness of his tactics and quickly extinguishes the arrows. We all have this promise: **“Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” 1 John 5:4.** If you want to be an overcomer—Faith in God and His provision is the way. Faith is a protective barrier between us and the schemes of Satan. When we believe God and take Him at His word, we remain grounded in truth, the lies of the enemy lose their power, and we become overcomers. In that way, faith is our shield.

Faith Built on Truth

That is why it is so important we build our faith on the truth, God’s Word. Our feelings about whether we can trust in God’s promises may rise and fall like the tides, but God’s truth in the Bible endures forever. God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ (Eph. 2:4). He didn’t wait for us to start; in Christ, God himself swam out to us in order to demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that he is on our side. What counts is not the strength of your faith, let alone the strength of your faithfulness. Your security lies in the fact that Jesus has been faithful for you; his strength, as the One in whom our faith rests, is our sure and certain hope.

Faith Points to God’s Promises

When the flaming darts of the evil one are flying, how can faith guard and strengthen you in your spiritual war against Satan? First, faith points our eyes toward the promises of God. Faith reminds us that this war is not all there is. God has promised us a wonderful future in his presence. We have a glorious inheritance stored up in Christ in comparison to which our present difficulties will seem like light and momentary afflictions. The end of the journey is just around the corner.

By faith, I lay hold of that truth by reminding myself of the promises of God. God has promised to be with me when I walk through deep and desperate trials (Ps. 23:4). **He has assured me that all things must work together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose** (Rom. 8:38). I know these things because God has promised them to me in his Word. He’s proved himself faithful, so even though I don’t know how the future will work out, I know he holds it in his hands.

Faith Lays Hold of God’s Power

When the evil one tempts you by saying: “You can’t help yourself. You know you are going to give in to this temptation eventually, because I’m stronger than you,” faith puts out the fire. Faith recalls what God’s Word says: **“Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world”** (1 John 4:4). I can’t take on Satan, but God can. In the midst of temptation, by faith we lean in to our Father’s greater strength. **“with which you are able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”**

The covering of canvas and calf-skin meant that if flaming arrows were expected, then the shield could be dipped in water and made soggy—so that the flaming arrows sent out when they hit it.

The shield of resolute faith protects us as believers from spiritual harm aimed at us by the evil one. It not only stops the fiery weapons of attack but actually extinguishes them, thus rendering them useless. We must be wary of laying aside our shields of faith and attempting to fight the battle in their own strength.

Help My Unbelief!

There is one more thing to say: even when I don’t believe with my whole heart that God is sovereign and good, which is often, that doesn’t change the truth. Our constant cry is, **“I believe; Lord, help my unbelief!”** And he does. Remember, it is not ultimately our faith that shields us, but God himself. When the shield of our faith wavers and drops, the Lord’s strong and mighty shield is always in place, keeping us safe from Satan’s assaults. In Luke 22:31–32 Jesus said to Peter, **“Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.”** Jesus, your great High Priest, prays for you, that in the midst of your trials and many failures, your faith would not fail. Here is good news indeed, for Jesus’s prayers are always answered.