

**Ephesians 6: 16; “The Shield of Faith”, Sermon # 10 in the series –  
“The Armor of God”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on  
November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

As I opened my concordance to begin my study for this sermon, I was quite amazed to see that in the whole Old Testament the word “faith” is only used twice. In Deuteronomy 32: 20, speaking of the nation of Israel, it says, “For they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith.” And in the second, it says, “Behold the proud, his soul is not upright within him; but the just shall live by faith.” And so we must therefore ask: Is this not the whole issue in all of history, and in every generation? Either we have the kind of faith which saves us from our sins and protects us from the Devil, or we do not have saving faith and we are still under Satan’s direction and his control. If we do not have true and saving faith it is either because we are proud and we refuse to believe God’s Word; that the Devil is stronger than ourselves, and that he holds us captive to do his will; or we are proud and self-justifying, thinking that we are good enough in ourselves to appear before the Judge of all the earth without any accusation being laid by the Devil at our door. In either of these cases, we are too proud to have saving faith. We need to see that we are really an unbeliever and that our soul is not right within us. The Devil has pulled the wool over our spiritual eyes. But when we see that faith is mentioned only twice in the whole Old Testament and almost 300 times in the New, we should be able to conclude that it was only because of Jesus Christ Himself, coming into the world, and coming into our hearts, that faith was brought into our hearts and our experience, and that it was His purpose that faith become a part of the armor for your soul. When you believe in Christ you receive the shield of faith.

As you read the Bible carefully, you come to see that it was not as though faith did not exist in the Old Testament. It is just that faith’s object had not yet been revealed in the Person of the promised Messiah. Promises had been given, but Christ Himself had to come into the world in order to become the fulfillment of those promises. Listen to the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3: 23 – “But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.” “Therefore the law was our tutor (our school-master) to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” “But after faith has come we are no longer under a tutor.” So, here in these verses Christ and faith are introduced as appearing together. Christ’s Person and His finished work of righteousness and sacrifice are the basis of all true faith. To have Christ is to have faith. To receive Christ is to receive faith. To have Christ is to have a shield which you must use in order to protect yourself from the accusations and attacks of the Devil. To do battle for Christ you must learn to wield the sword and take up the shield. Our text says that the purpose for which we take up this shield of faith is

to be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil one. As you live your Christian life you will come under attack. There are, therefore, several questions I would like to ask of this verse. 1<sup>st</sup> – What kind of faith is being spoken of here in verse 16 when it speaks of “the shield of faith”? 2<sup>nd</sup> – Why is this faith compared to a shield? And 3<sup>rd</sup> – How is this shield to be used by the believer in Jesus Christ?

**Question 1 – What kind of faith is being spoken about here in verse 16 when it mentions “the shield of faith”?**

We need to understand at the outset that there are several kinds of faith which can never be used as a shield. Turn with me over to James Chapter 2. We will look at verses 14-22. “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?” “Can faith (that kind of faith) save him?” “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?’ “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” “But someone will say, ‘Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.’ “You believe that there is one God.” “You do well.” “Even the demons believe—and tremble!” “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?” “Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” Here we find James contrasting true faith with false faith. And he first of all mentions what many theologians have called, “an Historical faith”. It is the faith that assents to the truth of what the Scriptures teach; that God is One, and that there is only one true and living God. But then he goes on to assert that this is the kind of faith that the demons also have, and that they even tremble at the thought. But this is not the faith that shields the soul from Satan’s deceptions and attacks. Each person who would have the shield of faith, and take it up and use it, must have a faith that leads them to works. Otherwise, this passage is teaching, you are a hypocrite. You say that you have faith, but your faith does not lead you to show actual compassion to believers in need around you. You say that you are willing to sacrifice all for God and Christ, but there is some relative or person who is more dear to you than God’s commandment that you should obey Him first and foremost of all, and so you cannot sacrifice your relationship with them upon the altar of obedience to the Word of God in some particular. You are willing to compromise the truth of God’s Word in order to keep your relationship with them, and in doing so, then, you show that your faith may not be a true faith.

Matthew 10: 37 says – “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.” “And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” No, when you come into these conflicts over obedience to God’s Word with your dearest relatives, know that this is the time to take up the shield of faith. If you have saving faith, then you must use it. The Devil wants to sift you like wheat. But know, that by faith in God, and faith in His Son Jesus Christ, your holding fast

to His Word as a shield will sustain you in all of these conflicts where Satan is trying to gain an advantage, not only over your dearest loved ones, but also to get you to dishonor God by putting obedience to His Word in second place behind Him. You may remember the trouble that Eli brought himself into in this regard. In 1 Samuel Chapter 2, verse 27 we find him falling under God's judgments upon his household because he would not restrain his sons from being priests when they were publicly known to be deep in sin. So God sent a prophet to Him. It says there – "Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, 'thus says the Lord: 'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?' 'Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me?' 'And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire?' 'Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?' This is what God said to Eli – "Therefore the Lord God of Israel says: 'I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.'" "But now the Lord says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

This was Eli's great mistake of his life and ministry; he honored his sons before God, and he allowed them to continue to minister when he should have told them to step down. In this he dishonored God and it brought his faith into question. Was it real? Perhaps it was, but in this particular regard he suffered great personal loss. Each of us, by way of application, must ask ourselves if there is any of our dearest relatives whom we would honor more than God, by letting them go on in their sins or in their doctrinal errors without confronting them? Are we willing to honor their wishes or their thoughts, or their way of doing things, more than what God clearly commands or states in His Word? God sees your faith; of what kind it is, and therefore you, as a true believer, should honor God by your thinking, saying, and doing things which will demonstrate to Him that you love Him more than all the selfish and sinful desires of people around you, to get what they want. That's true and saving faith in exercise. That is the faith that will do battle with the Devil and prevail.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Question – Why is this faith compared to a Shield?**

Well turn with me over to Psalm 5, verse 11. "But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name be joyful in You." "For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield." Faith is a shield because when we trust in God, He Himself comes to our defense. He defends not only our temporal or earthly interests, but more especially our souls; that is, our eternal interests. Verse 11 says, "Let them ever shout for joy because You defend them". "With favor He surrounds them," it says in verse 12, "as a shield". The

shield is His favor surrounding them. Why is it that He comes to their defense, even if they may have fallen into some sin? It is because the true believer is one of God's Elect, and he is in covenant with God through his Lord Jesus Christ. Why does God hate the workers of iniquity? Why does He break the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword of battle, as it says in Psalm 76: 3? It is because unbelieving men wage war with their sin against God. And Satan loves to strengthen such men in their sin. God Himself must become the believer's shield.

Look over at Psalm 3. We have already seen that sometimes spiritual conflict comes to us in our own household. It was true of Eli, and it was also true of David. "Lord, how they have increased who trouble me!" "Many are they who say of me, 'There is no help for him in God.'" "But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head." This Psalm was written during the time of David's son Absalom's rebellion against him. Absalom wanted to take the kingdom away from his own father. Even David's trusted friend and counselor, Ahithophel, had gone over to Absalom's side. But even though those who had been friends and relatives treacherously turned against him, David trusted in God, and God became to him his shield, his glory, and the One who lifted up his head. Our faith and trust in God is a shield because he is our glory. He will vindicate us. He will protect us. He will deliver us. Satan may stand behind wicked men in their wickedness, but Christ Himself is will help us. Look over at Psalm 28, verse 6. "Blessed be the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplications The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him." "The Lord is their strength, and He is the saving refuge of His anointed." "Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance; shepherd them also, and bear them up forever." I hope that you can see here that our faith is what asks for, and receives God's help. Our faith engages God, and prays for His help. Our faith also shields us from our fears. Our faith in Christ secures all the blessings of salvation and our on-going moment-by-moment faith protects our heart. Psalm 91, verse 1 – "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 (that is the Devil) and from the perilous pestilence." (That is, your own remaining indwelling corruption of sin, as a believer) "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 walk in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday." All of these awful things that are mentioned are a part of the spiritual battle that each and every Christian faces. Your faith is compared to a shield because when you have your faith in exercise in Christ you are protected from eternal death, even in the midst of Satan's most deadly attacks, by what Christ has done for you. But it is even more than that. You shall not be afraid of

these terrors when your faith is held up by you as a shield, because you know that Christ is right there with you, in the person of His Holy Spirit. If we were to go and read verses 7-16, we would find that Christ is the fulfillment of whom these verses were written to, and about. And it is your faith in Him, therefore, dear believer, that will cause these precious and magnificent promises to be fulfilled also in your personal experience by the power of His grace upholding your faith.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Question – How is this shield to be used?**

When Satan comes at the Christian, he comes shooting fiery darts at them, our text in Ephesians says. He shoots flaming arrows with poison tips at him. We would do well to remember Eve at this point. Satan came to her saying, ‘Did God really say?’ “Eve needed to hold up the shield of faith in God’s word at this point. She had free will to do so. But she was deceived by Satan’s lie to her. “Surely you will not die.” She should have contradicted what Satan said to her by saying, “Surely God did say that I would die!” “And I will believe God’s Word rather than your lie!” But she used her own reasoning instead, to decide for herself whether she would die or become wise. And she believed the lie. This leads me to say that you and I must hold before Satan, not only our subjective faith in God, but also our objective faith in God’s Word. We should remember that the Devil can quote Scripture too. He did so with our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was in the Wilderness. He tried to tempt Jesus to act independently of God His Father’s will, trying to get Him to worship him, trying to get Jesus to prove that He was the Son of God by an independent use of His power, to prove that the Scripture was true. Our Lord Jesus used the shield of faith very ably. Satan said, going back to Psalm 91 – “It is written, “He shall give His angels charge you,” Jesus, “therefore throw yourself down from this high place.” He conveniently left out the words, “to keep you in all your ways.” Rather, Jesus took His stand with the words of verse 9 of Psalm 91 – “Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you.” And even so, when we make the Lord, who is our refuge through Jesus Christ our Lord, even Him our dwelling place, no evil will befall us. We shall “tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion, and the serpent we shall trample under foot.” Each of these creatures mentioned is related to Satan, his demons, and the way that they attempt to destroy the faith of the Christian.

In closing, let me give you a couple final tips on how to use the shield of faith. 1<sup>st</sup> – Always remember to hold the shield up when are under attack from Satan. This means that there are many points in the Christian life where you must deliberately exercise faith. You must deliberately meditate upon those promises and those truths which will address your doubts and fears. You must search the Word, know the Word, and apply the Word to every situation of doubt and fear and temptation. And 2<sup>ndly</sup> – Remember that the shield is there to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil one. Make sure that you meet all the fire and the poison of the enemy with the faith that Christ has already overcome him. And since He has

overcome, so shall you. Justifying overcoming faith trusts in Christ's finished work. "We rest on Thee, our shield and our Defender; we go not forth alone against the foe; strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender; we rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go."