Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Believer's Armor, Part 4: The Shield of Faith
Scripture: Ephesians 6:16
Code: 1958

For our study this morning, we come again to Ephesians chapter 6 – Ephesians chapter 6 – and we're looking at this wonderful section on the armor of the Christian. I want to read for you chapter 6, verse 10 through 17. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies" – or wicked spirits in the heavenlies.

"Wherefore take to you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girded about with truthfulness, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;above all, taking the shield of faith, with which ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Now, here we have the great text in the book of Ephesians that delineates for us the warfare of the Christian, and we've learned a lot about the Christian's walk. Starting in chapter 4 verse 1, we met the concept of walking worthy, and what did a worthy walk involve? Well, it involved walking in unity, it involved walking in uniqueness, if you will; we are to be different than the Gentiles. It is to be a love walk, chapter 5 says, a light walk, a wise walk, a Holy Spirit walk, and finally, it is to be a warfare. Our manner of life in this world will be conflict; we are set against the enemy.

But as we've been seeing from this passage, there's no reason for us to fear that. There's no reason for us to get under the weather, as it were, to become fatalistic, because the victory is ours. And to express that, I'd like you to look at Romans chapter 8, verse 31 for just a moment – Romans 8:31. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" In other words, who could defeat us? Wouldn't God, who gave us Christ, give us any resource we needed to win the battle? "And who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Shall God that justifies?"

In other words, who is going to hold anything against us? If God is the highest court and God says we are just, who is an accuser? Verse 34: "Who is he that condemns? Shall Christ that died, yea rather,

that is risen again?" In other words, if He rose again for our justification, would He condemn us? The point is if God is the highest court, if Christ is the greatest judge, and they have declared us just and righteous, who should condemn us, who would possibly bring any accusation against us? The answer, obviously, is no one. Verse 35: "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'

"Nay, in all these things" – what things? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril sword, killed all day long, accounted as sheep for the slaughter – "in all these things we are super-conquerors through him that loved us. And so I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." We are hyper-conquerors, super-conquerors.

Admiral Nelson sent word to England of this triumph at Trafalgar, and this is his word, "Victory is not a strong enough word to describe the scene." It is more than victory – it is super-victory. That is what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 15:57, when he said, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and in 2 Corinthians 2:14 where he said, "Thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ." And what John meant in 1 John 5:5 when he said, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" We are overcomers, we are triumphing, we are victorious in Christ.

And so you see, by very definition – Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Corinthians 2, 1 John 5 – we are victors. We are invincible, we are super-conquerors. But that is speaking about the total picture, the positional picture, the ultimate war; the fact is in order to win the battle every day, we have to come to Ephesians chapter 6, because there we appropriate the armor that God has made available. And in appropriating this armor, we can be super-conquerors on a day to day basis. We can be more than conquerors. We can go beyond just winning the battle; we can take the spoil. We can go beyond just claiming victory; we can inherit all the possessions of the vanquished foe.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 20, Jehoshaphat leads Israel in a great celebration of victory, and I think it might fit our thoughts as an illustration. Second Chronicles 20:22. Israel is coming to battle, and that is spoken of in verse 22, "When they began to sing and to praise" – that's interesting – "the Lord set an ambush against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, everyone helped to destroy each other." You know what the Lord did? He just let all the enemies kill each other off while Israel stood there and praised God. They never even fired a shot.

“And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, and looked unto the multitude, and, behold, there were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil from them, they found among them in abundance riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days in gathering the spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Beracah; for there they blessed the Lord. Therefore, the name of the same place was called The Valley of Beracah, unto this day. And then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the Lord had made them rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the Lord. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel.”

Now, here is a picture of super-conquering; you don’t even have to fight the battle to start with, that’s amazing. Secondly, when the battle is over everyone on the enemy force is dead. Next, all of the spoil is yours undivided, and then they returned to Jerusalem singing and praising God. And ultimately verse 30 says, “God gave them rest,” from further battles. Super-conquering, a foe absolutely obliterated, not one remaining, spoil totally collected taking three days to garner, returning with joy and never having fired a shot, never having engaged in a fight, the whole victory given by the Lord. Now, that’s a super-conquering. And that’s the way it is in the Christian life. God does all the fighting, gives us the victory, and lets us collect all the spoils and enter into His presence with joy. That’s a super-conqueror. That’s the way God expects you to live your life day to day, with that kind of victorious living, with that kind of approach to life.

Now, in order to experience that positional reality in practical living, you must apply the armor of the Christian on a day to day basis, and that’s why we’re looking at Ephesians 6:10 to 17. How does a Christian make all of this available daily? How do we enter into the joy and rejoicing? How do we enter into this kind of an experience, as they had in those times when Israel won the great victory? How do we know that same joy, that same exhilaration, that same blessedness of having the battle be fought by the Lord? How can we stand fully enriched by the spoils gained? Well, the key is right here.

Let’s go back, then, to Ephesians 6 and find out. We see here six pieces of armor for the Christian; as long as we have them on, we’ll know the victory and the spoil that comes to super-conquerors. First, in verse 14, “have your loins girded about with truthfulness.” This we call the belt of truthfulness, and we’ve told you this means commitment, it means readiness, it means preparation. In other words, if we’re going to fight Satan, if we’re going into the war, we have to realize we have a formidable foe, we have a real enemy, and we’ve got to be ready. We have to gird up our loins, a symbol of preparation; we see it in many of the illustrations of Hebrew culture in history, where they would gird up their loins to move on a journey. And so a soldier must be ready for the fight, girding up his loins,

preparing for battle.

Secondly, verse 14 tells of “the breastplate of righteousness.” The breastplate of righteousness is that which indicates personal holiness, righteous living, and when sin enters our lives, we confess, and repent, and turn from it. And thus we keep a breastplate of righteousness covering our vital areas, covering our heart and our bowels, as the Hebrew would see it, the heart the seat of the thoughts, and the bowels the seat of the emotions, so that our thinking and feeling is guarded by holiness and righteousness. So as Christians, we are ready to fight. Everything is together, we are totally and absolutely and 100% committed.

Secondly, we are living a righteous, holy life. Third thing – and this is what we saw last week – we are to have on the shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Our feet are to be covered with the Gospel of peace. I told you the Romans had boots or semi-boots, kind of a sandal affair, that had a hobnail sticking out of the bottom, a series like cleats or spikes, and they would stand their ground firmly. And we see that the shoes that cause us to stand against Satan are really made of the Gospel of peace; that is, the good news that we’re at peace with God, and He’s on our side and we can stand in His resource. The same thing that allowed Peter to take a sword and start to fight the whole Roman army in the garden, because he knew Jesus was beside Him, and if he got in trouble, with a word, Jesus could knock them all over. And so as Christians we stand our ground, confident God is on our side.

Now then, how do we win with Satan’s army? How do we defeat his host of demons? How do we stop the antagonism that attacks us from the kingdom of darkness? We do it by commitment, we do it by holiness, and we do it by confidence that God’s power and resource is sufficient. But this morning I want us to move on to the next piece of armor, and we’re just going to talk about one, the shield of faith. Look at verse 16, the shield of faith. “And above all, taking the shield of faith, with which ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” Now, whatever the shield of faith is, folks, it is sufficient, because it quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one. That is a pretty broad statement. It is sufficient for the total of the need.

Now, there are several kinds of shields used by different parts of the army in Roman times, depending upon the kind of thing you were doing, and what you were involved in. But two stand out. The first is a rather small, round shield, sort of like a giant Frisbee, shaped in that kind of fashion, and curled at the edges. It was strapped with two straps, normally to the forearm, the left arm of the soldier. It was to be very light, so that it could be carried about when a soldier was a mobile foot soldier, and he would use it to parry the blows of hand to hand combat. In the right hand was a sword, and according to verse 17, the sword is a *machaira*, which is a Greek word meaning dagger – it’s a short sword.

And they would get into hand to hand combat, in the one hand would be this little sword they would be fighting with, and in the other would be that which they parried the blows of the opponent with, and that would be the shield. That is not the word used here, the word used here is *thureon*, and it refers to a completely different shield. *Thureon* is a shield that was four and a half feet by two and a half feet; it was a great, big, thick, plank of wood. It was covered on the outside with metal, and sometimes with even leather, very thick, so that when arrows were shot, fiery arrows, they would hit that metal and deflect, or they would hit the leather and the leather would be oiled or treated so that it would extinguish the fiery pitch as it hit.

But it was a massive piece of wood, really – four and a half by two and a half, and if you'll remember, in those days people were much smaller than they are today. Even in the times of the history of England and Scotland, and we were there not long ago looking at some suits of armor, and if you've ever been to The Tower of London you see the same thing. You look at the armor that they wore, and you wonder who could have gotten in that but your High School, junior high kids, they're so small. They were very small people. And in the time of the Lord, as far as we know it was the same situation; the people were very small. And a four and a half by two and a half foot shield would give you total protection. You just stick it on the ground and get behind it. That's what it was used for. It was designed for full protection.

Now, when the Roman army would fight, usually this would be kind of the battle strategy if it was a major battle. There would be a long line of these soldiers in the front of the troops with these shields. Behind would be all of the soldiers with arrows and swords and everything else, and as they moved along, they would come to the enemy. They would plant those shields side by side creating a huge wall of protection. Behind that wall, the archers would send their arrows flying, little by little inching the wall closer and closer, and finally entering into the hand to hand combat, frequently.

But that's what would be happening, and the guys in the front would provide the line, the wall, that really was the front line of the army. And it would shield those soldiers against the arrows that would fly. And of course, once the barrage of arrows came, those would be the guys who had the greatest protection. Now, it's true also that even in the troops behind, there would be those with these also, to protect themselves. But you can imagine if you didn't have a shield like that, and all of a sudden a barrage of arrows came from behind the enemy phalanx, you could never possibly fight them off. But you could get behind your shield and be protected, and so this is a double protection, a double protection.

Now, listen to me: you'll notice it begins in verse 16 with the words "Above all." It does not mean it's the most important; that is not the emphasis. It's not talking about the issue of importance; that is not an issue dealt with in this section of the armor of the Christian. In fact, I told you before, there's nothing said here about which is most important. They're all essential, and they even overlap. But he's saying on top of everything else, in addition to everything else. You have your belt, your

breastplate, your shoes – now in addition to that, above all that, and by the way, the above all refers not just to the shield, but to the last three pieces of armor. “Above all,” it says, “taking the shield of faith,” and then verse 17, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.”

Now, notice, and I’ll show you a very important thought: the “above all” introduces all three remaining elements, and there’s even a distinction in the verbs to show there is a difference. You have in verse 14, “having” as the verb, having your loins, having your feet, and having on the breastplate, and the idea of the verb, the “having” verb is that this is something that is permanent. This is what you have on. This is a permanent kind of thing, a long range preparation. For example, there would be a lull in the battle, and in a lull in the battle, a soldier would go over and he would rest, but he would not take off his breastplate, he wouldn’t take off his belt and his shoes. That was just always there; he would have that on at all times. But when the battle got hot, verse 16, he would take his shield, verse 17, he would take his helmet and his sword. So the first three are long range preparation, the second three are for immediate readiness. This is grasping that which really is necessary in the heat of the battle.

Now granted, if you have commitment, your belt is on, and you have absolute holiness in your life, your breastplate is on, and you have confidence in God’s power, you’re standing with your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. That would seem to be sufficient, and really it is. It’s just that the rest of this is kind of a double protection, and is useful for when the battle really gets furious. Now, the rest of it you keep on all the time. A believer shouldn’t have to get committed. I remember growing up, and so many times going to conferences, and they’d say, “We’re going to have a rededication; we want you all to rededicate your life.” I went to a school where they used to do that all the time. We’d have meetings month after month after month. Somebody would come in and speak to the Christian students, and call for a recommitment, and a rededication, and a reconsecration, and the same people would go through the same thing, always doing it.

Well, the point is they were simply going back to the three basics. They were going back to commitment, to righteousness, and to confidence in God’s power, which is something they should have kept on all the time, see? But when the arrows start flying in mass force, then you must have the shield of faith, then you pull on the helmet of salvation, and then you grab the sword of the Spirit. It’s kind of like watching a baseball player who sits on the bench, and when he goes to sit on the bench, he doesn’t take his uniform off. His uniform stays on. He’s got sliding pads on. He’s probably got knee pads, too. He’s got his baseball spikes on. But when it comes time to bat, he puts a helmet on, and he gets a bat in his hand – why? Because he has been prepared but now he takes the weapons of his warfare in hand for the battle.

You see it happen in a football game – the guy sits on the bench, off comes the helmet and so forth, and when he goes into the game, he pulls it on and takes off, and that’s essentially the distinction that the apostle is showing here. There are some long range elements of preparation, and some for immediate readiness as the battle ensues. And so on top of the first three – which are clamped,

clasped, tied, sort of buckled, locked in place, immovable – come these three which are grabbed by the hand for the immediacy of the battle. And it's a wonderful thing, beloved, to think about this. You know, God is in the business of doubly protecting His children. It would have been enough to have confidence in God's power – the right shoes – enough to have a breastplate of righteousness, enough to have a belt of commitment, but God gives us a double protection, which is so great, and it's like Him.

I was thinking of John 10, where it says that our lives are in Christ's hand; we are His sheep, and He has put us in the Father's hand, and nobody can take us out. So you have God and Christ both holding onto the believer, both securing the believer, hiding us together. And so this double sense of protection is not uncommon to God's way of thinking. And so the Christian soldier also has a double kind of protection from the enemy. When the battle gets furious, and the arrows start flying, he takes the shield of faith.

Now, what is it for? Verse 16: "with which you shall be able to quench" – that means to put out and extinguish not some, not most, but – "all the fiery darts of the wicked." So I tell you, whatever it is, it'll do the job, right? Whatever the shield of faith is, it's enough. You might even say that this is the only piece of armor you need at all. That's how comprehensive it is, but it's a double protection. All of the fiery darts are quenched. Now, where do they come from? The end of verse 16, you see in the authorized, "the wicked." The Greek is "the wicked one;" the wicked one, who is Satan. The evil one, literally; *ponros* means the bad one, the vile one, the wretched one. Satan is firing and using his demons to fire all of these fiery darts, and we are quenching them by the shield of faith.

Now, I want you to notice that the term "the evil one" or "the wicked one" or "the bad one" reminds us that this battle is not against a philosophy, it's against a personal being. Yesterday in the L.A. Times there was an article by John Dart reviewing a new book by a man named Jewett, who is claiming that all of those people who are talking about the coming of Jesus Christ are really misrepresenting the Bible and misrepresenting the truth. He has written a book to undermine all of that, and one of the things he claims in the book is that there's no real devil. That's not true. Why, we have right here the evil one; in verse 11, the devil is mentioned. There's no question about this. He is the source. We are not fighting an abstract, impersonal thing. When young people go and picket, as ours did last night, Plato's Retreat, a place of vile immorality, they're not fighting a philosophy, they're fighting a being. When you and I write letters to stop gay rights, when we write letters to stop abortion, we're not fighting some kind of philosophical, impersonal, abstraction. We're fighting against the devil and his demons, who are actively involved in an aggressive attack on the truth of God, and the character of God, and His people.

And so that's what Paul sees here. This thing quenches the fiery darts of the evil one. Now we need to ask ourselves, what are the fiery darts? What is it we're trying to stop? Well, in the battle of those days, the archers would get their arrows, and they would put some material, some ball of cotton or

something like that on the tip, and it would be soaked in pitch, which would burn rather slowly but rather hotly. And then they would have that dipped, and before they would shoot the arrow, they would light it, fire it, and when it hit its target, it would splatter the pitch. And it would start little fires on the clothing of the soldier or whatever and burn him, or burn up, perhaps, whatever target they had in view, if it was made of wood. And so this was what was in Paul's mind, and with the deflection of a metal face on a shield, or the leather that would extinguish these, there could be protection.

Now, what are Satan's fiery darts? Well, it's simple, isn't it? They're seducing temptations, that's all. He's simply referring to temptation. Satan fires shafts of impurity, shafts of selfishness, doubt, fear, disappointment, lust, greed, vanity, covetousness – it all comes down to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. He literally bombards the believer with the arrows, the fiery darts of seductive temptation, to elicit out of us ungodly, non-Christlike, evil responses. And the only defense we have at this point, Paul says, is the shield of faith, because sometimes it just rains temptation. We live in a world where it really does – it really does, all around us, and we must have the shield of faith.

Now, what does he mean by the shield of faith? We understand the Roman picture; we got the picture of the army and the arrows flying around. Why is faith a shield against temptation? How does faith parry the arrows? How does faith secure the victory? Well, first of all, let me say that the term "faith" means believing God, and that is the bottom line of the Christian faith. That is the bottom line of everything we believe, everything we hold to, everything we have our confidence in. The whole of Christianity is an act of believing that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Believing that He wrote the Bible, believing that Christ is God, believing that He died, believing that He rose, believing that He's coming, believing that by believing we can enter into His Kingdom – the whole thing. That's why Habakkuk 2:4 says, "The just shall live by his faith." Romans 1:17 says, "The just shall live by faith." Galatians 3:11: "The just shall live by faith." Hebrews 10, "The just shall live by faith."

Now, when God says something that many times, you get the message; the just live by faith. Faith is our life; it is a matter of believing God. Now, everybody lives by something, everybody has faith in something. You get in your car, you have faith it'll get you where you're going without blowing up. A lot of people got in an American Airlines airplane with confident faith they'd land in Los Angeles. One lady said, I've got to get to L.A., I've got to get to L.A., I've got to get to L.A.," and a man gave her his seat. She had all the faith in the world. We're not just talking about that, like the man in the magazine ad. They have that monstrous bulldozing earthmover, that huge thing, and the man stands there with his arms folded like this and says, "I call her Faith 'cause she can move mountains." Well, you might have faith in a bulldozer. You might have faith in an airplane.

I'll always remember reading in Reader's Digest about the people who drank the water in the town in Kansas. It was coming to them on some kind of a pipe system out of a great big huge reservoir storage tank. And what was so fascinating about it was they drained the storage tank when they

converted to another system, and they found all kinds of dead animals in the bottom of the storage tank, and everybody got retroactive dysentery. It's one thing to live by faith, but you'd better be sure your faith is in the right thing. Oliver Wendell Holmes pulled up his chest one day and said – and everybody thought it was a great statement – he said, "It is faith in something that makes life worth living" – faith in something? It's not faith in something.

A little leaguer came in to his mom, and he said, "Mom, I think we're going to lose the game today." She said, "No, no, son, think positive." "All right, I'm positive we're going to lose the game today." Faith has got to be in something that's worth putting faith in. What is faith? Faith is believing God. Now, hang onto this – believing God. And every fiery dart that Satan ever shot was a lie, right? And if you bought it, and if I bought it, we believed him, not God. When the great missionary John Payton was translating the Scripture for the South Sea Islanders, he found there was no word in their vocabulary for "believe." There was no word in their vocabulary for "trust" or "have faith." He had no idea how he would convey it to them, since they had no word for it.

One day as he was in his hut translating, a native came running, and running hard and fast, ran up the stairs and in, and just flopped himself in Payton's study in a chair. And then he said to John Payton, "It's so good to rest my whole weight in this chair." And John Payton said, "I had my word; faith is resting your whole weight on God." That became the word that entered into the translation of their New Testament that brought that whole civilization of natives to Christ. Believing is putting your whole weight on God. It's saying, "If God said it, it's true, and I'll believe it."

Now, how does this work in temptation? Let me show you. God comes to the Garden of Eden, creates a perfect environment, creates a perfect man and perfect woman – perfect in the sense of sinlessness, not in the sense of an accomplished perfection, untested. And there they are, and now here comes Satan disguised as a serpent, and what does he say? "Has God really said?" And then he says, "You know, God doesn't want you to know good and evil because you'll be like Him, and He doesn't like competition. You can't trust God He has ulterior motives. You can't always believe exactly what He says." Satan was tempting them to doubt God and believe him. Eve was a sucker, Eve was a fool, she believed the devil, and you know what happened. Every temptation that ever came to you came on the tack of "believe me, not God."

Well, you come to the New Testament, the great passage on temptation is in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, the temptation of Jesus Christ. Christ has been fasting forty days and forty nights, led into the wilderness by the Spirit of God as God prepared Him for His ministry. At the end of that time, Satan comes to Him to tempt Him. And how does he tempt Him? He tempts Him to not believe God – same old deal. "Don't believe God, believe me." And this is the approach: "Take those stones and turn them into bread."

Now, there's nothing wrong with doing that. If you're the Son of God you can make stones bread; it's not a moral thing. Some people say the sin was in eating bread. It's not a sin to eat bread. If that's true we're all sinners, most of you had it for breakfast. That's not the point. There's no sin in eating bread, and there's no sin in doing a miracle, if you happen to be God. Here was the approach, though: Satan was saying to Him, "Hey, what's the deal? Forty days in the wilderness, nothing to eat, forty days out here in this Godforsaken devastation, forty days out here – what has God done, abandoned You? Why, God said He would take care of You, God said He would sustain You, God said He would replenish Your need, and You're the Son of God, what's going on? Grab some satisfaction. You can't wait for God, He's forgotten You."

You see, it was a temptation to distrust God, a temptation to not believe God, a temptation to take things into His own hands. And then Satan said, "Look, didn't God promise to make You the Messiah, didn't God promise that every knee would bow before You, didn't God promise that You'd be the King, and all of these things? Didn't God promise You homage and worship, 'kiss the Son' and all of that stuff – where is it? Look at You out here. Come with me, and we'll go to the temple, and You'll dive off and they'll say, 'wow, what a deal, this is the Messiah,' and You'll get all the stuff You've been looking for. And by the way, didn't God tell You He'd give You the kingdoms of the world? You're not doing too well. You don't have any of them. Come with me, and I'll give them to You."

In other words, "Don't believe God, He doesn't keep His word, He didn't give You the whole picture, He didn't tell You the truth. Believe me, do it my way." And that's the way every temptation comes to every believer every time. Satan comes along and says, "Oh yeah, I know the Bible says you're not supposed to have sexual relationships with somebody outside of marriage, but it's fun." It's like *Christianity Today* had an article where they interviewed Christian people. One guy who had had over fifty sexual involvements and wasn't married said, "God made everything good and sex is part of it" – who's he believing? He's not believing God; he's believing Satan's lie. Every time you sin, you've bought Satan's lie, every time.

Some people say, "Well, I know the Bible says I'm only to marry a Christian, and he's not a Christian but oh, we have this wonderful relationship. The Lord will work it all out; we're all praying for him. And you know, after all, the Lord is gracious" – and you know what you've done? God says, "Don't do it. Satan says, "Do it, do it, do it." Who did you believe? Satan, Satan. God says, "Don't read that; don't read that corruption in front of you. Don't read that dirty magazine. Don't go watch that dirty film. Don't cheat on your income tax. Don't do that at the office that isn't right. Don't claim something you don't really have on your expense account. Don't do that." Satan says, "Do it, do it. You'll get a little more money, you'll have a little more thrills." Who do you believe when you sin? You believe the devil. It's the bottom line, people; it's so simple. When you sin, you believe Satan; when you obey, you believe God. That's the bottom line. And the shield is the double protection. "I will believe God," said Christ. "Get away, Satan. God will feed Me when He's ready, and God will anoint Me as Messiah when He's ready, and God will give Me the kingdoms of the world when He's ready, on His terms. I will not

believe you."

First John 5:10 says, "If you doubt God you make Him a" – what? "A liar." Is God a liar? Titus 1:2: "God, who cannot lie." God isn't lying. And yet every time you sin, you're dumb enough to believe Satan, and so am I; we've been suckered again. "Oh, I know that I ought to give this to the Lord, this is what I ought to give the Lord, but oh boy, I want to buy this, I want to do this, I want to save this." And so we do what we think we're going to win by doing; we're going to do it and we're going just sort of shove God in a corner, it'll all work out, you know. And all we've done is cheat ourselves, see? We just cheat ourselves. God stands there with His hands open, and He says, "If you ask Me for bread, will I give you a stone?" No. "Do I want to open the windows of heaven and pour out blessing, so much you can't contain it? Do I want to give it back to you pressed down, shaken together, and running over? "Do I want to bless you with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies? Do I want to do exceedingly abundantly above all you can ask or think? Do I want to give you every good and perfect thing that comes down from the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning? Do I want to unload all of this substance of heaven all over you for as long as you live? Yes, I do. And will you believe Me and obey Me so I can?" Satan comes along and says, "Do it my way, and you'll like it." It'll be fun. It'll fulfill you. You'll gain what you" – it's a lie. He is a liar, John 8:44, and the father of lies, and every time he comes it's a lying intent.

Whenever you sin, you're saying, "I really don't believe God knows best, Satan knows best." Do you believe that? No. We say, "Oh, my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus," and we all say, "Amen, brother, preach it. Yes, He'll supply all your needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus, no question about it." And then when we lose a job, "Ohh, God what are You doing to me? Ohh" – see? Desperation – "The Lord has forsaken us," see? "Yes, we know the Bible says, I've never seen God's people begging bread,' oh yes, 'seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added.'" And we run through life seeking all the things that should be added and missing the Kingdom of God. You see, you can't just go around saying, "I believe God, I have faith in God, the just shall live by faith," and then grab everything you can grab.

Proverbs 8:34 says, "Happy is the man who hears my word and keeps it." You want to be happy? Obey. Jeremiah 15:16, Jeremiah was living in the midst of a society where nobody listened to God, absolutely nobody. And yet he said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was in me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Psalm 119 from beginning to end says how wonderful it is to obey the Word of God. Revelation 1:3 says, "Happy is the man who reads this and keeps it." First John 1:4, "I write these things unto you that your joy may be full." If you want joy and blessing abundant, obey the Word, if you want your heart to burn in you as it did in those on the Road to Emmaus, then let the Word find root in your life. Satan comes along and says, "Don't believe God, have fun. Don't believe God, do what you think." And every time you sin, you believe the devil. It's pretty dumb, isn't it? But we keep doing it. You know, I hate him so much I just don't want to sin, because I don't even like to give him that much satisfaction, let alone forfeit the blessing of God.

So the only way to quench the darts of Satan is to believe God. The Bible says, “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.” Who do you believe? Abraham believed God. Who do you believe? Do you believe God? Second Corinthians 1:24 says, “By faith ye stand.” That’s right, it’s the shield that causes us to stand, faith in God. Believe God and you’ll stand. Proverbs 30 verse 5 – oh, it’s a great statement – “Every word of God is pure; he is a shield unto those who put their trust in him. Don’t add to his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

In other words, what God said is true. If you believe it and obey it, it’ll be a shield; if you mess with it, you’ll suffer, see? Satan comes along and says, “Oh well, I know God said that, but let me add this.” No. No, “He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.” And then in Psalm 12, verse 6, you have a similar word: “The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tested in a furnace of earth, seven times purified.” In Psalm 18, verse 30, we find this, “As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; he is a shield to all those who trust in him.” As long as you believe God, your shield is up. I hope you understand this, it’s just that simple. Satan lies, you believe his lie, the shield comes down, you get it. Trust God in everything. First John 5:4, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

Oh, that’s right. We win when we believe God, we win when we trust God. You may go through doubts, and anxieties, and fears, and worries, and concerns, and problems, and struggles, and trials, and tribulations, and persecution. As long as you believe God, as you believe His sustenance, you believe His Word, you believe His power, you believe His promise, that doesn’t have to be a point of loss; it can be a point of strengthening, a point of gain.

In 1 Peter 5:8 and 9, a verse we’ve referred to many times in this study, Peter says, “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” – now listen – “Whom resist steadfast in faith.” Steadfast in faith; you resist the devil by believing God. So let me sum it up. The shield of faith is the consistent application of what we believe about God to the issues of life. Now, if you don’t trust Him then you don’t know Him well enough, right – because if you really knew Him, you’d trust Him. Oh, the more you know God, the deeper you get into the heart of God, the more you know about His truth, and the Word of God, and the more you meditate upon His person in your prayers and meditating times, the more you know God, the greater you’ll trust God, and the greater you trust God, the less likely you will be to not believe Him.

And so it all goes back, as everything does in the Christian life, to your relationship to God. It’s there; it’s down deep in the heart. If you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, if you believe that God is who He claimed to be, if you believe all that God’s promises that He gave to you are really true, then you’re not going to sin, because you’re going to stand in the place of the greatest blessing. Everybody wants to be blessed, everybody wants the best. God says, “I’ll give it to you if you do it My way.” If you do it Satan’s way, you just disbelieved God. But the more you know Him, the more you’ll

trust Him, the more you'll believe Him. Genesis 15:1, God said, "Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield." Isn't that great? "I am thy shield." Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." Proverbs says, "The name of our Lord is a strong tower, and the righteous runs into it and is safe." Psalm 84 says, "The Lord God is a shield." He's on your side, and He wants to bless you, and He wants to give you victory over Satan, but you've got to believe Him, and do it His way. Keep His Word, and obey it.

So, we're ready for the battle, the belt of commitment, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of confidence that God's on our side, and then when the battle begins we grab the shield, taking it up, and we parry the fiery darts of temptation by trusting God implicitly. Beloved, there's no reason, there's no reason to lose the battle, none at all, because ultimately, the war is ours. Romans 8, we are more than conquerors; that's the total picture, no sense losing along the way. If we put the armor on, we'll win. Let's pray together. As we pray, I want to borrow a prayer, a prayer from an old Puritan, who expressed what's in my heart. Pray with me.

Oh God, I bless Thee that the issue of the battle between Thyself and Satan has never been uncertain, and will end in victory. I thank Thee that Calvary broke the dragon's head, and I contend with a vanquished foe, who with all his subtlety and strength, has already been overcome. When I feel the serpent at my heel, may I remember Him whose heel was bruised, but who when bruised broke the devil's head. My soul with inward joy extols the mighty conqueror. Heal me, oh God, of any wounds received in the great conflict. If I have gathered defilement, if my faith has suffered damage, if my hope is less than bright, if my love is not fervent, if some creature comfort occupies my heart, if my soul sinks under the pressure of the fight, oh Thou, whose every promise is balm, who's every touch is life, draw near to Thy weary warrior. Refresh me, oh Lord, that I may rise again to wage the strife, and never tire till my enemy is trodden down. Give me such fellowship with Thee that I may defy Satan, unbelief, the flesh, the world, with delight that comes not from a creature, and which a creature cannot mar. Oh Lord, give me a draft of the eternal fountain that lies in Thy immutable everlasting love; then shall my hand never weaken, my feet never stumble, my sword never rust, my helmet never shatter, my breastplate never fall. My strength shall ever rest in the power of Thy might, and my faith shall shield me from every temptation.

Father, to that prayer I add this: if there are some in our midst this morning who've never even joined the army – they don't even know the Lord Jesus Christ – oh God, may this be the day that they open their hearts to Christ. And for those who are Christians, Lord, who have such deep needs, who hunger to know the victory, may this be the day when they get the armor on, that they may know that victory that You've granted to all of Your super-conquerors through the risen Christ; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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