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

The Armor of God: The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace and The Shield of Faith

Scripture: Ephesians 6:15-16

Code: 90-366

Well, we have the opportunity again tonight to open the Word of God to the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians and a section that we have come to know as the believer's armor...the believer's armor. Ephesians chapter 6 and actually verses 10 all the way down through verse 18.

There was a time in the life of Martin Luther that his conflict with Satan was so real that he says he picked up his inkwell, sitting on his desk, and threw it at the devil. The ink stain remained on the wall for years as a reminder of the reality of that conflict. We are all engaged in a conflict with the enemy of God, the enemy of Christ, the enemy of our souls, the enemy of truth. That conflict is inevitable because we who are part of the Kingdom of God, we who are the slaves of Jesus Christ, we who are the soldiers of Christ, as it were, are in enemy territory. Satan is the prince of the power of the air, the ruler of this world. He and his minions, his demons which constitute a third of the angels, run their wicked anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-truth, anti-life system through this world. As long as we are here, we are engaged in that battle. That's why in verse 10 we read, "Finally be strong in the Lord in the strength of His might.. Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the full armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day and having done everything to stand firm."

In the opening couple of messages, we addressed these verses and try to draw out some foundational understanding of the spiritual conflict in which we engage. Understand this, that if you are a believer, you are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Satan does not dwell within you. In fact, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. And He that is in you is the Holy Spirit. No Christian can be devil possessed, or demon possessed. We're not talking about that. We're not talking about demon possession which can only occur in one who does not belong to God, in whom the Spirit does not dwell.

What we're talking about is the battle that a Spirit-indwelt child of God faces living in Satan's world. And it isn't what Satan does in us, as if he lived there, or what demons do in us as if they lived there, it is what they do outside of us that panders to the fallenness that is in us. We have been redeemed. We have become regenerate. We are new creations, as we heard tonight. We have different affections, different motivations, different loves, different attachments. We value things completely opposite the way we valued them before we came to Christ. Life is new for us. We are a new creation, however, incarcerated in unredeemed flesh. We still possess fallen propensities to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. That is what is in us. What is in us is our fallenness, what is in us is sin. Romans 7, it is sin that is in me, Paul says. That is why I'm still a wretched man. That is why I don't do what I ought to do and I do what I ought not to do. In fact, I do

what I don't want to do and don't do what I actually want to do. It is sin that is in me. It is a principle still operating in me that wars against the Law of God that now dominates my mind, my new creation.

Satan who is outside of us works the world system in such a way as to assault us at the points of our fallenness. We live in a hostile world, a world that is filled with manifest promotion of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It dominates our culture in some ways more now than ever, at least on the media front. It isn't that sinners are worse now, although there is some increasing degree as we read in the words of the Apostle Paul, "Evil men grow worse and worse." But it isn't so much that there have never been sinners before, or there's never been sin before. There has always been sin. There has always been vile, wretched sin through all of human history. But the exposure level because of mass media at this part of human history is something beyond anything people in the past had to endure. It was impossible, for example, to have a full pornographic experience in your room at home. That was not possible. Before it had direct access to something you hold in your hand wherever you are. It was impossible to have the kind of sexual explosion on your mind that you get by looking at a thirty-foot high screen that's sixty-feet wide and watching people committing immoral acts. That level of assault is part and parcel of living in this century and the previous one.

That's what Satan does. Satan works in that system. That's the wicked side of it. The moral side of it, deceptively moral side of it is in religion. Satan also operates all false religions in the world. So Satan operates false religions in the world, false forms of Christianity, he wears clerical garb. He runs certain seminaries and colleges that call themselves Christian and call themselves religious. He's in charge of all of that and he's also in charge of the pornographic industry. And every form of sin and add mixture in between. This is the world system that assaults us with false religion and blatant sin and everything that's in the middle.

This is the war. The war for us is to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh. The war for us is to live in the Spirit and not in the flesh. The war for us is to love what is right, holy, and just and good and not find our affections attached to what is evil because it is so alluringly presented to us. Now there is a basic contrast between what God does and what Satan does that can be simply understood. God reveals truth. Satan conceals truth. God tells us the truth. Satan tells us lies. God gives life. Satan takes life. He has the power of death. God produces spiritual works. Satan produces fleshly works. God brings along tests to make us mature. Satan brings along temptations to destroy us. God sets us free. Satan imprisons us. So it goes.

And so, we live in this world and as I said, the world in which we live today has capabilities and capacities to assault us in ways that the worlds of the past didn't have. The question then is...how do we deal with this and live a triumphant life? How do we overcome these things that are all around us and in our face and therefore in our minds, therefore pandering to our remaining fallenness?

Well there are some things that we can offer as very important elements to the answer to the question...how do we deal with this? One way is to remind yourself that Hebrews 2:14 is true. Jesus came to render powerless...that's what Hebrews 2:14 says...render powerless the devil." Or 1 John 3:8, "The Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil." Recognize this then that Christ has

defeated Satan. He is a vanquished foe. He is not the victor. He is the vanquished. Genesis 3:15, way back there it said that when the seed of the woman came, who is the Messiah, He would crush the serpent's head. That's why Romans 16:20 says that Satan will shortly be put under your feet. He is a defeated enemy.

So, like sin that remains in us, we no longer have to sin. We do not have to lose. He is not a foe who can overpower us. I think that's so important to mention because there are people who think that Satan has this kind of invincibility that overpowers God. Certainly if Satan can overpower God and God's purposes, he can certainly overpower us. But that is not what the Bible teaches. At the cross he was rendered powerless. His abilities are completely confined and limited by the sovereign purposes of God. He is the victim, not the victor and greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world, 1 John 4:4.

The second thing to understand, not only is the fact that Satan is a vanquished foe and you do not need to collapse under the weight of his efforts because you have a greater strength within you in the power of the Holy Spirit. But secondly, even saying that, you have to follow that up by having to be alert to his efforts and resist them. First Peter 5, "Be sober." In other words, get your priorities right, think straight. Be on the alert for the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. You have to be aware of what's going on around you. In James 4:7 it says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

So while we understand he's a vanquished foe, that in itself does not mean he's not going to have an impact on us if we are not alert, sober-minded, thinking clearly, thinking biblically and doing everything we can to avoid this roaring lion.

Bringing you down a little further. The third thing you need to realize is that you cannot give any room for his entry. Ephesians 4:27 says, "Do not give the devil an opportunity." Don't put yourself in a situation where you give him an opportunity. Yes, he is the victim, not the victor. You recognize that. You have a greater power within you. Still, you have to think clearly, maintain spiritual priorities, be alert at all times, resisting him strong in the Christian faith. That is to say the truth of sound doctrine, never giving room for him to have entry, giving him no opportunity.

Bringing it down further. "Flee from temptation." Second Timothy 2:22 says, "Flee youthful lust and pursue righteousness." You have to run from the things that give Satan an opportunity. The other side of that, bringing it down even further is to give control of your life to Christ. Second Corinthians 10:5 says, "Bringing every thought captive to Christ." First Corinthians 2:16 says, "We have the mind of Christ." Think like Christ thinks. Or Philippians 2, "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Those are things we're all familiar with as Christians, right? Those are sort of the basics of living a godly life in an ungodly world. But there's another way to say all of that. There's another way to grab all of that pull it into one memorable format and it's this, put on the whole armor of God. Put on the whole armor of God. And that brings us to our text.

The armor of God, it's just another way to pull all of those components together in a memorable fashion, in a mental image of a soldier. We have the best outfitted army ever. We have the best Commander in Chief, we are the most powerful force that's ever walked on the earth. But if you go out without your armor, you're going to be vulnerable. Put it on and you can handle anything the enemy brings. So let's look again at the armor.

Ephesians 6...the first thing we saw, and this will bring you down to where we left off last time, in verse 14, to the opening words, "Stand firm." That's what we're talking about here. "Standing firm under the assault of Satan in the world system." Stand firm....how? "Having girded your loins with truth." The belt of truth, we talked about that last time. Since Satan is a liar and the father of lies, it is obvious that you must know the truth. But that's really not the main issue here. The word *aletheia* is used in the sense of truthfulness, or commitment based on that truth, or conviction tied to that truth.

In other words, as a Christian, you must not only understand the truth but you must fully embrace the truth with the kind of conviction that makes you determined to go out and to battle against all lies and deception. In other words, you're serious about the warfare. This is commitment to the battle. Remember I told you, the first thing a Roman soldier did, wore a tunic, it was like a dress, was put a sash around his waist or a belt around his waist and pull up his tunic inside so that it became a minitunic so he could move rapidly, cinch that belt or sash down so it wasn't flying around in the breeze when he was in a hand-to-hand combat. Pulled in all the loose ends. Peter says the same thing, remember? "Gird up your loins," 1 Peter 1, tile the loose ends of your life together, square up with the things you know to be true and make a commitment to live according to the truth. That's where it starts. Bottom line, you're really not going to win the forays, the battles that come with Satan if you're not committed to winning. Get serious about it.

The second thing we talked about last time was the breastplate of righteousness. This is obvious if you have any image of a soldier in ancient days, they had a breastplate of one kind or another. We talked about the kinds last time. To cover their vital organs. The breastplate that we must wear is that of righteousness. Not talking about forensic righteousness or imputed righteousness that comes to us from Christ, but that imparted righteousness, that personal holiness that protects us from sin. The breastplate is holiness, righteous living. Unless you walk in holiness on a daily basis, you're in trouble.

I mentioned Romans chapter 13, it's worth another mention, and verse 11 which says, "Knowing that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep, for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed, the night is almost gone, the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." What does that mean? Don't behave in carousing, drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, sensuality, strife and jealousy but put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Make no provision for the flesh for its lusts. That's what we're talking about.

First of all, you know the truth. The truth is your conviction and you go out to battle, committed to living the truth. Secondly, you protect yourself by putting on holiness and righteousness. What does that look like? Well he tells you what it doesn't look like, sensuality and all those other things, sexual promiscuity, etc., etc. And he also tells you what it doesn't look like when he says put on the Lord

Jesus Christ. Put on Christ's likeness.

Now that brings us to two more for tonight. Two more pieces of armor, if we have time. Look at verse 15 for the first one. "And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

I think in the society in which we live is probably and most societies even down to the time of our Lord's life on earth, people understood the importance of having the right shoes, particularly if you happened to be a soldier engaged in a battle.

I never fought in a war. The Lord was gracious to me in that. I was willing. But I was deferred because I had a football injury. But while the military wouldn't take me, the football coach would. So I played all those years with that injury. And that's the closest I ever came to mortal combat. As you know, occasionally it can be mortal. And I have some vivid memories of my past in football which I don't speak of very often because my wife has heard them all and doesn't want to hear them again. There were some notable exploits along the way, both in high school and in my university days. But there's one that stands out in my mind that fits here perfectly.

We were playing a football game of some consequence in the famous Pasadena Rose Bowl when I was in college. My responsibility was to receive the opening kickoff among other things. I was a runner, pass receiver and so forth. And I returned the punts and the kickoffs.

I was back. I had had a debate with the people in the locker room about what kind of shoes I was going to wear because there had been heavy rains in the month of December that year and in those days they were not sophisticated at how they put grass on the field and so rather than resodding the field for this event, they just took vegetable dye and painted the dirt green. And by the way, when you played on a field that had been painted green, you were green very quickly everywhere.

I was debating whether I wanted my speed shoes or whether I wanted those clunky ones with the long cleats. And I opted out for speed. And it was a big mistake. The opening kickoff came down and I took the kickoff on the five yard line and I immediately sat down all by myself on the four yard line. This was not what I had envisioned. What I had envisioned was a 95 yard touchdown. That's not what happened. Nobody was within 15 yards of me. I had made a fatal mistake. Wrong shoes. I took one step, my feet went right out from under me, the dirt went into the air and I inauspiciously landed on my southern hemisphere to the...with a jocular effect, believe me, on the crowd.

Shoes are important. If they're important in an athletic contest, they're certainly important in some kind of hand-to-hand mortal combat. Armies have been defeated for lack of shoes. Have you read that in history? You know enough about history even in America in the Revolutionary War, one of the greatest problems in the American...Revolutionary War when the Americans were trying to fight against the British was they were barefoot because their shoes were worn out. You know the old adage, for the want of a nail, the kingdom was lost. You know what that's about, for the want of a nail, the shoe was lost, for the want of the shoe the horse was lost, for the want of the horse the soldier was lost, for the want of the soldier the kingdom was lost. How you shod yourself is very

important.

The Romans understood that. The Romans understood that it was essential to make sure that the soldier with everything else that he had, and particularly because what he was carrying and wearing was relatively heavy that he could stabilize himself. And remember now, what we're talking about, please if you go back to the beginning of verse 14 is standing firm...standing firm. Slipping is not good in a hand-to-hand combat.

In Roman times there are historical accounts of long marches. The Roman army amazingly had long marches over terrible terrain, wearing out the leather in their shoes. Historians tell us that took the toll in thousands of thousands of lives in the battles. Proper shoes were essential. Because if you're not firm on the ground, it doesn't matter what you can do. Your whole body will be immediately debilitated. Shoes are vital.

Now the Roman soldiers generally wore a very tough sandal...very, very tough leather with straps holding it firmly on. And what they did was they pounded nails from the inside through the bottom, thick hob nails, studs like a football shoe or a baseball shoe or soccer shoe. And that gave the soldier the ability to stand firm in his footing as he was engaged in the fight, to run up a hill and to run down a hill without slipping and sliding.

Also, a familiar device in ancient warfare was to place traps in the ground. These are the precursors to mines. We know about that, don't we? People crossing mine fields in the wars in our history and even in the Middle East today are blown up. Well before there were mine fields, in the ancient times, they would take sticks and they would sharpen the points of those sticks and then they would bury them in the ground with the points sticking up. Invariably the points sticking up out of the ground would rip up a barefoot soldier or penetrate readily through a weak piece of leather. These hidden traps were great dangers because if you had your foot injured, you were done. Slashes, bleeding, infection, meant debilitation.

And Paul sees a spiritual parallel to this very familiar part of a soldier's uniform, or armor. So he says in verse 15, "Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." The idea here is made ready, equipped. The feet are to be prepared. The feet are to be equipped for the battle like all the other vital parts.

Now through the years, most commentators have said what this means is that you have a symbolic call to evangelism here. And they borrow it from that idea, from Romans 10:15. "Blessed are the feet of those who preach the good news." Which is a quote from Isaiah 52:7. But Romans 10:15, "And the feet of those who preach the good news," is not a verse to explain this. In the first place, that has nothing to do with warfare. That has nothing to do with shoes. That's just saying to the people who hear the gospel will bless the people who brought it to them. Paul is not talking about going anywhere. He's not talking about traversing any place. He's not talking about taking the gospel to anyone. He's talking about standing, not going. The issue is not evangelism. The issue is taking a firm stand in a battle against the devil as he assaults our lives. It's like 1 Corinthians 16:13, "Stand fast in the faith." The idea here is that our feet need to be equipped to stand firmly when the attacking

blows come.

What is it that can allow the believer to stand unflinching, take his stand, never slip, never slide, never fall under attack, what is it that gives us a firm footing? It is having your feet prepared with the gospel of peace...the gospel of peace. What does that mean? Well the gospel of peace is the gospel, sometimes called the gospel of Christ, it's sometimes called the gospel of God like in Romans 1. And here it's called the gospel of peace.

What is the gospel of peace? It is the good news that you have made peace with God. That's essentially the theme of the opening verses of Romans 5. Look at this Romans 5 verse 1, "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. What does it mean to be at peace with God? Simply it means that God is not our enemy, but God is our strength. And it takes you right back to Ephesians 6:10, "Be ye strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." It means He's on our side. We stand firm because we know that we are in reality invincible.

Satan may come at us, tempting us one way or another, we are firm in the great truth that we are at peace with God, therefore God is on our side. I think that's what was in Peter's mind when he grabbed a sword in the Garden and whacked off the first available ear and was going to go through the whole crowd. What made him feel so strong, this man who could so easily be a coward? Well, Jesus was standing beside him, right there and what had Jesus just done? He had declared His identity and the entire crowd of hundreds of people fell over flat when He spoke. Now that would leave Peter with the impression that he was pretty safe. Pulled out his sword because he knew who was on his side and he knew what kind of power He had.

All we need is Christ and we can stand against everything Satan has to bring. You go into the battle with Satan and if you're not sure where you stand with Christ, if you've got doubts, you're very vulnerable. You have nothing to fear. People have asked me that through the years. "Don't you fear what the devil can do to you?" No because I know who is on my side and whose side I'm on. I have made peace with God. God is on my side with a full power that He brings to bear on behalf of His own in defending us.

And, that's what we heard in the testimony a little earlier. "Nothing is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ," right? Nothing...Romans 8...nothing. In fact, that passage is so powerful it's worth reading. "If God is for us...what's the rest?...who's against us?" Verse 31. "If He didn't spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" If He gave up His Son for us when we were sinners, what would He withhold from us now that we're saints? Who wills separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, those are all things Paul personally experienced and they didn't separate him. No. Even when we were put to death, as it were, all day long, even when we're considered sheep to be slaughtered, in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, or any other created thing is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is this kind of realization that gives us the security to hold our ground. I don't feel like I need to become a monk. I don't feel like I need to have my eyes plucked out so I can't see anything. I don't think I need to flagellate my body and wound it and injure it and harm it somehow to push down the flesh otherwise I'm going to end up in hell. I am secure in my salvation. I take the Word of God at face value as the truth.

"I know that whoever the Father chooses, He gives to the Son. Whoever He gives to the Son, the Son receives. Whoever the Son receives, the Son keeps and raises them all at the last day," John 6. I have no fear of that. Therefore I have no fear of Satan. I stand firm in the truth. I stand firm against the onslaught of Satan in the confidence that God is on my side and His strength is fully available to me.

We had a group of people come to this church years ago from another church. And I said, "What was it that brought you here?" They said, "We all visited this church on a Sunday when you preached that God is sovereign and we never went back because up to that point we had lived under teaching that Satan was sovereign and we could no longer stand the sovereignty of Satan idea. He'll kill your children. He'll give you diseases. He'll fill your house with demons. And you've got to pray him out of every room and out of your baby's crib," and on and on and on and on. You're not ready to engage in the war if you're not confident of the strength of the Lord. And if you don't know it well, remember Judges 7, the host of Midian came against God's people and Israel gathered an army of 32 thousand total. And God said I don't need 32 thousand, just give me 300. Remember? Just give me 300. And they won. And they won.

We were all born in rebellion against God, but while we were enemies, God loved us and while we were enemies, Christ died for us. And we have made peace with God and God is on our side and all the power is ours.

You know, I've taught the Christian's armor for many, many years. And it's always new, it's always fresh and I always say different things. But I never come to this particular point, I don't think of an incident that happened when I was in junior high and most of my junior high is long forgotten. Only several things that I remember. One of them was I was a preacher's kid and I would die so I got an F in algebra. I'll never forget that, that was not fair. It's not worth telling you the story. I had to take it all over again. I hated it both times.

But there's another thing I remember from my junior high. It was in a public junior high school in Downey, California where my Dad was a pastor. And I had a friend named Roger and Roger was just the kind of kid you want to tease, smaller than everybody else and rounder than everybody else, with a boyish little smile and rosy cheeks. Just the kind of kid bullies pick on. And they did and some times they hurt him. Some times they hurt him. And I was his friend and some times they hurt me.

One day they basically split my head from front to back in wood shop. And Roger got weary of it. So I said, "Roger, what are you going to do about it?" And he said, "I'm going to tell my brother." Oh-ho, his brother was the middle linebacker for Cal State Long Beach football team, huge, from a junior high perspective, really huge. I remember Roger telling me that his brother drove a bread truck as a

job, and drove it into a wall and walked away. So he could take a hit, I'll put it that way.

One day, Roger came to school and I was there. He said, "Come, and come early and come to the gym." And Roger walked up to the ringleader of this, who by the way is dead, died in a barroom fight. And Roger said something like, "I'm tired of the way you treat me." And they just laughed at him. And then Steve came around the corner and he said, "Which one is it, Roger?" "That one."

I'm telling you, it was something to behold. That young man lost all his front teeth...shot. Picked him up, threw him over the hedge against the gym. Turned to the others and said, "Leave Roger alone."

I will tell you this. In our junior high from then on, Roger ruled. You know, it has to do with who's behind you, right? Where your strength comes from. It's so wonderful to know that you can go into this world, we can penetrate this world, folks, we don't have to become monks, we don't have to go hide somewhere to find safe ground. We can penetrate the world. We have to penetrate the world, don't we? In that sense, it is...we have to carry the gospel of peace but we can firm and take our stand because we know where the power is behind us. And it is the absolutely sufficient power provided by the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, you want to be triumph in your Christian life, we've looked at three pieces of armor that help us to understand what that means. Ask yourself, first of all, with regard to the belt, do you really want to win? How much does it matter? That's the first issue. If you're content to live in the low ground, if you're content to live with your petty sins, if you're content with your marginal commitment to worship with your indifference to the things of God, you'll lose. You'll lose repeatedly and you'll lose severely. You're not going to lose your salvation, but you're going to render yourself virtually useless to the purposes of God, therefore you'll forfeit an eternal reward and you'll wind up under divine chastening, instead of enjoying the benefits of blessing.

So ask yourself. Are you pulling in the loose ends of your life? Do you really want to go into this battle? Are you committed to the truth? Do you have convictions about the truth? And are you willing to go to war for those convictions?

Secondly, do you seek to support that with a holy life? Or are you content with your sin? Really, another way to look at the same thing.

Thirdly, do you have the kind of confidence that it takes to march in to the den of the roaring lion? It's a wonderful thing. Yeah, I think about...people ask me so many times when I go on television and I talk to these people in very, very adversarial environments where I don't even know what they're going to say and the whole world is watching, and all of that, on CNN or whatever. Do I have confidence? And I just remember what Jesus said to His disciples. "Don't worry about what you're going to say, when you get there I'll tell you what to say." And while I'm not an Apostle and I don't get divine revelation, it is amazing what comes out of my mouth that I haven't planned to say. I don't have any fear of what they're going to do to me. I don't have any fear they're going to destroy my faith no matter what arguments they make. I'm confident in the One who supports me. If God is for

me, who can be against me?

So, do I really want to win? Do I seek to live a holy life? And am I bold in the battle, confident in the strength that is provided for me?

That brings us to the fourth part of our armor. I don't think I can go through all of it, but I can introduce it to you...Shield of faith...the shield of faith.

Now obviously if you have any familiarity whatsoever with ancient armor, you're very familiar with the idea of a shield. So verse 16 says, "In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one."

Now what are we talking about? Well we've got to make the image clear because that helps us to understand the analogy. There's several kinds of shields that were used by different armies and by different branches of the same Roman army. For example, if you were a gladiator, you've probably seen depictions of this, if you were a gladiator, if you were among the Greeks, for example, you would use a shield that was very small, very round and you would hold it in your hand and it would wrap around your wrist and it would be easy to move the shield around to parry the blows that were coming at you in that kind of environment. If you were right handed, of course, it would be strapped to your opposite arm and with this one you would make the thrust with your own dagger. With the other one, you would use the shield to parry the thrusts that were coming from your mortal enemy. This is a small light weight, usually pounded metal, pounded very thin, designed for the free movement of the soldier in this kind of hand-to-hand combat.

That's not the word here, that's a different word. The word here, *thureon*, is not a small shield, it's probably around four feet in height and about two or two and a half feet in width. The design of this shield was to put it in the ground and be able to put your entire body behind it. This is a large oblong shield like a small door, designed for full protection. You wouldn't be holding it when you got into hand-to-hand combat, it was designed for full protection in the initial phases of ancient battles.

Now you know how ancient armies used to fight in a line called a phalanx? They would come like a side-winding snake across the ground like this...all shoulder, to shoulder, to shoulder. You see that even in the Revolutionary War. The British were still doing that, getting picked off like sitting ducks as they marched shoulder to shoulder.

Well the ancient armies did that and they first put the soldiers with these *thureon*shields, these whole shields that gave the front line complete protection. There would be many rows of those and the bodies would be able to hide behind them so they couldn't be hit by anything flying in the air. And behind them were the archers who would be shooting their arrows over the rows and rows of shielded soldiers out front. And they would move eventually that way across the land, a solid line of protection until they engaged the enemy in the hand-to-hand combat when those shields be laid aside because they were useless and you would go to battle if you had another one, a smaller shield, or if not you just fought with your sword.

What is this? Well, please notice some very important components. In addition to all, the NAS says, I think the Old Authorized said above all, it doesn't mean it's more important, it simply means that on top of everything else. You have to have our belt on, pull all the loose ends in, you have to have your breastplate on, protect your vital organs, you have to have your shoes on to be able to stand firm. And above that, on top of that, in addition to that, you need to get a shield. This provides double protection. It really does. We're going to talk about in a minute your helmet which you already have to cover your head. Your breastplate which you already have to cover your vital organs, and this is double protection. That's what "above all" means. Above the shield, above the shoes, and above the sash or the belt, and above the breastplate, you need to have the shield.

But it's not only that. In addition to those three, you take three more...the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, verses 16 and 17...the shield of faith, verse 16; verse 17, the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit. So you have three pieces that are fixed, then you have three pieces that are added. A soldier has his belt on, the soldier has the preparation, the readiness to go to battle. He's got his breastplate on. He's got his shoes on. Perhaps he's still at rest. But once the battle starts, picks up his shield, puts on his helmet and takes up his sword.

This is immediate readiness. So you not only have sort of long-range staple routine, constant protection, but when the battle gets hot, there are some things you grab. So when there's a little bit of a lull in the battle, the soldier may lay his sword down, he may lay his helmet down, he may put his heavy shield down but at all times he keeps his feet shod and he keeps his breastplate covered and he keeps his belt on so that when the call to battle is given, he can pick up the pieces in addition and go to war.

Well the first of these additional above all components in verse 16 is the shield of faith...the shield of faith. And what's it for? Well, it is so that you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one, or if you have an old version, the fiery darts might come to mind, flaming missiles from the wicked one. Who is the wicked one? *Ha poneros*, Satan, he's the source of the attack. We do not just fight evil in the world, we fight the evil one. That's what we've been learning. It's not an abstract impersonal thing, evil is not some kind of floating force, it is not just the reality of negativity in the universe, it is a personal devil. And 1 John 5:19 says, "The whole world lies in the lap of the evil one."

Now in the battles in those days there were ways in which you attacked those men who had shields. They made arrows, arrows that would have a metal tip. And they would put around those metal tips, or behind those metal tips, pitch, a kind of tar. Just before shooting them they would light the tar which is high in oil content and they would become flaming arrows. You've seen pictures of that, images of that. And they would fire those arrows. Shields at the same time were often covered in leather and the leather would be thick, sometimes the leather would be saturated with a kind of oil that would extinguish a fiery arrow. A soldier without a shield in the front lines would be powerless to protect himself. Even if he was able to keep something from hitting him in a vital area, if he got hit by a fiery arrow it would set his clothes on fire and he would be a torch in no time.

So the shield was very important as that front line protection. Now I believe these fiery darts that this

is depicting are symbols of seducing temptation, shafts of impurity, of lustfulness, of greed, of vanity, of materialism, of pride, of anger, of impatience, of covetousness, all these things. And they come at us in this world system, and they come at us all the time. We're never to be content with anything. We're to lust after everything we don't have whether it's a material thing or another person, we're never to be satisfied. See, the heart of all sin is dissatisfaction. Not only dissatisfaction of what you have, but dissatisfaction with what God says you should have or gives you.

See, that's what was going on the Garden, wasn't it? When Satan came to Eve, what did he say? Well the implication of what he said is, "Guess what, Eve, God is not who you think He is. You think God is so wonderful and so good, but the truth of the matter is there's that tree over there, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which has beautiful fruit, good to eat and He told you no. There's something wrong with God. I'm the good guy, I'm telling you it's beautiful to eat, it's a delight to eat, you ought to have a right to eat it. And the fact that God doesn't allow you to eat that, tells you there's a flaw in God because He's withholding something beautiful and something good."

I read a letter on my desk this morning from a young man who used to go to our church who is now after 47 years of singleness decided to jump into homosexuality. And he has become the partner of a minister, a homosexual minister. In fact, at the end of his letter he signed his name and no name(?), the sign of a fish with a rainbow in it. Just really revolting to me cause I care about him and Patricia and I know his mother so very, very well. But his letter said basically this. "For all these years I have been cheated. I now am free to enjoy the best of life and this I think is what God had for me all along." Well there is a god who does that that for you, it's the god of this world. And his conclusion is that the restraints that were on him in the past were unacceptable. He doesn't want anything to do with a God who puts those kinds of restraints on.

Well that's what Satan was doing with Eve. "Come on, what kind of god is going to restrict you from what's beautiful and good?" Those are the fiery darts. And what extinguishes them? I'll tell you what, faith. What does that mean? Believing that God does have the best for you, right? That's the faith.

So, when you sin, who do you believe? Satan. But you deserve this, you have a right to this, you should enjoy this, you should do this. You don't need to be restrained. You don't need to be limited. Jump in. That's the fiery dart. And you have the remaining sin, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life and the system comes at that with a viciousness and you either say, "You know, you're right, Satan," or you say, "I'm going to trust God that His commandments are best, that His commandments are true, that His commandments produce the greatest fulfillment, the greatest satisfaction, and the greatest joy."

It comes down to that, folks. If you sin you believe the lie. When you do what is right, you believe God. When you look, for example, at the temptation of Christ, you can see that because Satan comes to Christ, you remember, let me close with this, Matthew 4, cause this is such a good illustration of it. Satan comes to Christ, the tempter comes to Him, He hasn't eaten in 40 days and 40 nights, He's hungry, He's been led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of letting the devil after Him. Why? Because God wants Him to pass the test and vindicate His holiness. The

tempter comes in verse 3, says, "If You're the Son of God, command these stones to become bread?" Do you understand that temptation? "What kind of a deal is this? You are the Son of God, You're hungry. That's ridiculous. What is Your Father doing to You? You are the perfect, sinless, holy, beloved Son of God, You should never want for anything. You should never lack for anything and God is somehow warped if He withholds anything from You."

That's the temptation. Distrust God. "I am for You...Satan is saying...I don't want You to be hungry, I want You to have what You deserve, You're the Son of God, make some bread."

"But He answered and said, 'It is written, man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." And He says, in a sense, "I will not distrust God. I feed not on bread to satisfy Me, but on the Word of God."

The devil takes Him in to the holy city, Jerusalem. Has Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, probably the southeast corner which had about a 400 foot drop, or three hundred and some odd feet. Said to Him, "If You're the Son of God, throw Yourself down. What is this? You're the Son of God and nobody knows it. You're the Son of God and You're out in the wilderness and You're hungry and nobody knows You're the Son of God. What in the world are You doing? Why don't You just do a dive off this precipice, come down to a soft landing and everybody will believe in You?" In other words, claim what you have a right to. Claim what you think satisfies You. Claim what You want.

If You're...verse 6...the Son of God, throw Yourself down. Doesn't the Old Testament say He'll give His angels charge concerning You and on their hands they'll bear You up lest You strike Your foot against a stone. Believe me, Satan can quote Scripture with the best of them.

Jesus said, on the other hand, "It's written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test." I'm not going to do something that God has not willed for me to do and thus test Him. I'm going to trust God. He'll feed Me when it's time to feed Me and He'll proclaim My Messiahship when it's time."

Then the devil took Him to a high mountain. It starts with a simple thing, food. Gives Him a little bigger thing, convince the Jews that You're the Messiah. To the whole world, takes Him to a high mountain, shows Him all the kingdoms of the world in their glory. This tells you who is in charge of the world system. He says, "All these things will I give You if You fall down and worship me."

Did He have a right to them? Did Jesus have a right to all the kingdoms of the world? Of course He did...of course He did. Satan is saying the same thing. What kind of God have you got? Something's wrong with God, He's flawed. You're hungry and You're His Son. You're His Messiah and nobody knows it and nobody believes it. You're supposed to be the king of the world, look at You. You have nothing. I'll give it all to you, just fall down and worship me.

Now that's exactly what you do when you sin. You decide Satan will be my god for this experience, Satan will be my god for this moment. I'm believing him and not God.

But that wasn't Jesus' response, He said, "Be gone, Satan, for it's written, you shall worship the Lord

your God and Him only shall you serve." And the devil left Him and the angels came and ministered to Him.

So, you know, whenever Satan comes at us in the world system and panders to our fallenness, it is to make us believe him instead of believing God, that our real satisfaction, our real happiness, our real fun, a real fulfillment is going to be found in the things he tells us to do, rather than the things God tells us to do. And when you sin, you believe Satan. And when you don't, you believe God. That's why the shield that protects you from temptation is faith...faith in God.

Well I'm going to leave it there because I do want to say a few more things, but that's the way I always feel. And I will say a few more things next time about this, and then we'll look into the helmet and probably have one whole session just on the sword of the Spirit, okay? All right, let's pray.

It's been a wonderful day for us, Father. We have thoroughly been blessed to be with those of like precious faith. We've been so encouraged in the worship, in the fellowship, and instruction that comes out of holy Scripture. We thank You, Lord, for the clarity with which Your words speak to us, it's such a blessing and benediction. We know exactly what You're saying and we thank You for it. And may we live it to Your great glory and our own good, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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