

War Zone

Part 6 – The Armour of God (Part 2)

Eph 6:10-18

ILLUS – Johnny was 20 years old when he joined the Australian Air Force to become an electronics technician. But the first thing he had to do was get through Basic Training. Failure to pass Basic Training meant that he would be back-coursed and have to wait for the next intake. Part of Basic was weapons training. They had to understand firing accuracy, how to label all rifle parts, recite the series of events the rifle experienced in firing and reloading, how the round travelled through the air (including at what stage in its trajectory it was higher or lower than the target), and how to strip the rifle and reassemble it in under two minutes – some of it blindfolded. One small mistake meant being back-coursed for 4 weeks. Irrespective of their ultimate job in the Air Force everyone had to gain a 100% pass with their weapons training to avoid being back-coursed. Any soldier has to learn how to handle his weapons.

So far in this series, we've seen that we're in a spiritual war; that the battle takes place primarily in the mind; that temptation is Satan's primary method of gaining access into our lives; that his aim is to build strongholds.

We've also started to look at the armour of God which is essential in being able to actively combat the enemy.

So far, we've seen that we must wear the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and have on our feet the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Let's continue to look at the rest of the armour God has given us.

The Armour Of God

4. The shield of faith

Above all, take the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one (vs 16)

I want to give you some interesting facts about this shield.

FACT 1

Here the term employed is *thureos*, the large shield, four feet in length and two and a half feet in width, ... which protected the whole body. This Roman shield was generally made of wood with a thick coating of leather¹.

Because of its size and shape, the word for shield, comes from the Greek word for door².

The shield provided protection for the soldier's entire body.

It meant he could advance without fear of being struck by arrows, swords or spears.

Any soldier who dropped his shield in battle was in serious danger.

Ps 37:1-3 – You can trust the Lord.

FACT 2

The shield was a weapon of offence as well as defence.

The legionary was taught to fight with his left leg and shield thrust forward, using the shield to try to push his opponent over³.

¹ Lincoln, Andrew T. *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* p449-450

² Vincent, Marvin *Word Studies in the New Testament* Vol 3, p409

The boots dug into the ground so that the soldier could push forward and not give way.

The shield pushed the enemy over, and they were killed with the sword.

This is a picture of aggressive faith.

This isn't the usual idea of so many Christians whose main goal in life is to maintain the *status quo*, to live a comfortable life, waiting for the big bad devil to attack them, and then they go cry in a corner.

They're afraid of getting hurt, afraid of taking a risk, afraid of pain.

But this is a picture of the church of the Living God rising up as the army of God, attacking the devil, and *the devil's* on the run.

Why do you think Jesus said to Peter, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it?"

Gates don't attack people!

This is the church storming the gates of hell, and those gates unable to withstand the onslaught of the saints.

FACT 3

The shields were shields with names.

Each shield had the names of the soldier and his centurion on it⁴.

There are two names inscribed on my shield of faith – my name and the name of Jesus, my leader.

This highlights again the personal nature of faith.

We can pray for others and see things happen in the spiritual realm, but ultimately my faith involves two persons.

Me and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your name is on your shield, and the name of your centurion is on that shield too, Jesus Christ.

This brings us to the **name of Jesus** as a weapon of our warfare.

John 14:13-14 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
(14) If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

Often – especially in Pentecostal / Charismatic churches – we take this to mean...

I want a new house, Mercedes, Rolex watch, latest computer, and ... oh yeah, in the name of Jesus.

But that's not what it means.

It's part of our shield of faith and we need to understand some things about it.

The Name of Jesus isn't a magic formula.

You can't just say, "I want this, I want that, and I want something else in the name of Jesus" and think that that means your prayer must be answered because you used the magic formula. Or that God is up there saying, "I don't think so. Oh hang on, they said, 'In the name of Jesus.' Oh, all right. I suppose I'd better give it to you now you said the magic words."

That's not how it works.

This approach only leads to disappointment where people say, "I tried what the Bible says and it doesn't work."

Of course that doesn't work, because that's not what it means.

So how does it work?

³ *How Was It Done?* p331

⁴ *Nelson's Bible Encyclopaedia For The Family* p178

1. It's an acknowledgement that I'm a representative of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:18 And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

When they preached, they did it in the name of Jesus.

That doesn't mean they tagged on "in the name of Jesus" at the end of the sermon.

It means they preached as His representatives.

Let's take a look at what this means.

ILLUS – I can't just go up to someone and say, "I arrest you in the name of Her Majesty the Queen."

And the main reason I can't is that when I say "in the name of Her Majesty the Queen", I'm implying that I'm her representative, and I'm not.

ILLUS – Acts 19:11-16 There were seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva. And they must have seen what Paul was doing casting out demons. And they had what they thought was a brilliant idea. "I know this guy who's demon-possessed. Let's go and use the same formula that guy Paul is using – in the name of Jesus – and cast the demons out of him. But when they tried it, the demon inside the man said, "I know Jesus, and I'm acquainted with Paul, but who are you?" And then he pounced on them, overcame all seven of them, stripped them, and beat them up.

The name of Jesus is not a formula.

It's a statement of representation.

It means that when I use that phrase "in the name of Jesus" I better make darned sure that I'm actually representing His interests.

I can't say, "I claim that Mercedes in the name of Jesus."

If I do that, whose interests am I really representing? Mine.

This account also demonstrates that our representation is based on relationship; the sons of Sceva made the mistake of thinking that it was a formula, but they didn't have the relationship.

No relationship means no authority.

2. Using the name of Jesus means that I understand that if I am representing the Lord Jesus Christ and His interests, I have all the power and authority of heaven to back me up.

ILLUS – If I go up to someone and say, "I saw you run that red light. I'm putting you under arrest," he'll say, "Yeah, right. You and whose army?" But if I'm Senior Constable Tony Llewellyn, and I say, "I saw you run that red light. I'm putting you under arrest." That's different. He looks at my uniform which represents my legal authority, he looks at my gun which represents the power I have to back it up, and he says, "Okay officer."

I can say the same words, but with different effects.

Because it's not who I am that makes the difference, it's what or who I represent.

That makes all the difference.

You can be confident that if you're representing the interests of the Kingdom of God and not just your own interests, you will have all the backing of God's power and authority.

Nothing will stand in your way – absolutely nothing.

Through faith, nothing can prevent you from achieving the will of God in your life.

Rom 8:31 "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Once you've made certain that what you're asking for is the will of God for you, you can ask with confidence.

John 14:13-14 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
(14) If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

For instance, who wants to see signs and wonders? So do I.

Acts 4:30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.

To take this verse, ask for signs and wonders and tag on “in the name of Jesus” is to turn it into a formula.

What we have to remember is that verse 30 is the end of a sentence that began in verse 29.

Acts 4:29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,

What were they doing? Representing His interests by preaching the Word of God.

And with that in mind, they could continue to represent His interests by asking for signs and wonders.

They weren't just asking for miracles so they could go home feeling all fuzzy inside.

If supernatural manifestations don't somehow work to the advantage of the Kingdom of God, they no longer serve any purpose.

Their purpose is to advance the Kingdom.

What can the name of Jesus do?

The name of Jesus brings healing.

Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

The name of Jesus brings deliverance from demonic powers.

Acts 16:18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour.

But both of these occasions happened when they were preaching the Gospel.

3. In the name of Jesus means I'm representing His interests and therefore I will ask according to His will.

1 John 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (15) And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

Does this mean I have to have a Bible verse to support what I'm asking for? Not necessarily.

ILLUS – If I'm a missionary preaching the Gospel in Africa and walking from village to village, it might make me a lot more effective if I had a motorbike. I might have a growing sense in my spirit that this is what God wants. So do I look in my Bible for a supporting verse? Of course not! I'm not going to be worried about a verse. I'm representing the King. And I'm going to expect all the help I can get in doing His will most effectively.

It's not, “Oh, yeah. In the name of Jesus.”

The whole point is doing the will of God, and God gives us backup in answering our prayers.

FACT 4

United faith

ILLUS – As a boy I remember hearing the story of the Normans invading England. My father's name was Norman, so it kind of confused me. I think I had visions of all these guys named Norman invading. But it was at this battle – the Battle of Hastings – that King Harold II of England died when an arrow struck him in the face.

That was a real problem in Bible days too.

When they were attacking a city, it was common in those days for soldiers to be subjected to a whole barrage of arrows that the enemy would rain down on them.

It was very difficult to protect yourself from that kind of aerial assault, because the arrows came so quickly and the only way to see them coming was to expose your head.

It's difficult enough to see an arrow when it goes whizzing past, but when it's headed straight for you it's little more than a pin-point.

But the Roman army had an effective strategy.

The edges of their shields were so constructed that an entire line of soldiers could interlock shields and march into the enemy like a solid wall⁵.

They would move in a group; the soldiers in front would interlock their shields protecting themselves, and the soldiers behind interlocked their shields overhead.

It was kind of like the forerunner to the tank, only with lots of soldiers inside.

It's called the tortoise formation⁶ and it gives us a picture of what happens when we lock shields.

There's something powerful about united faith.

Lev 26:8 Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you.

It's interesting that this verse is talking about warfare.

It says, "**Five** of you shall chase a **hundred**, and a **hundred** of you shall put **ten thousand** to flight."

What's wrong with God's arithmetic?

Doesn't He know that if five can chase a hundred, that means a hundred can chase 2,000, not 10,000?

But God has a different kind of arithmetic.

We expect a graph that has a straight line, but God's graph is an exponential curve.

When we join shields, there's a power far greater than the sum of each individual one.

This illustrates an important truth – the importance of united faith.

This fits in with what Jesus said too:

Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. (Mat 18:19)

Combined faith is very powerful.

FACT 5

The shield was carried on the left arm and manoeuvred so as to repel attacks of various kinds, including "fire-tipped darts" or other flaming missiles ... even when such a missile was caught by the shield and did not penetrate to the body ... it caused panic, because it was thrown when well alight and its motion through the air made it blaze more fiercely, so that the soldier was tempted to get rid of his burning shield and expose himself to the enemy's spear-thrusts. But the "shield of faith" not only catches the incendiary devices but extinguishes them⁷.

Fiery darts are any temptation to discard your shield of faith in the midst of battle.

It could be discouragement: "What's the use? God never listens to me anyway."

Fear, the opposite of faith: "Oh, no, I could never do that." The "I Can't" Syndrome.

It could be sickness, disappointment, guilt.

But whatever you're facing, lift up your shield of faith.

⁵ Wiersbe, Warren *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament Vol 2* p58

⁶ *Nelson's Bible Encyclopaedia For The Family* p175

⁷ Bruce, F.F. *NICNT: Epistle to the Ephesians* p408

Any Christian who prefers their comfort zone to moving with God is dropping their shield.

ILLUS – Israel in the wilderness, had a choice either to go forward in faith, or stand still in unbelief.

Any Christian who refuses to do what God wants is dropping their shield, and will eventually get left behind like the Israelites.

Don't throw your shield down.

To neutralise the arrows, the leather coating of each shield was soaked in water before battle, so that the wood of the shield was not set on fire.

Faith reminds us of our dependence on God.

Faith is the opposite of self-confidence.

The flame of the fire-tipped dart spreads on combustible material.

Temptation acts on susceptible material too.

Self-confidence is combustible.

But if you're using your shield of faith that's been soaked in the water of the word (Eph 5:26), God will keep you whatever you go through.

Faith, in doing away with dependence on self, takes away fuel for the enemy's fiery darts.

It creates sensitiveness to holy influences by which the power of temptation is neutralised⁸.

Faith will not burn when hit by the fiery darts of the enemy, but self-confidence will.

The shield of faith – it's so powerful.

Is it any wonder Paul says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith"?

Don't give up; if you have a promise from God, you can trust Him.

⁸ Vincent, Marvin *Word Studies in the New Testament* Vol 3, p410