

Lessons Learned from

The Book of Ephesians

Spiritual Warfare

Book 2



Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Vistoso Community Church

Sermon Series

Spiritual Warfare Book 2

**We have an enemy,
and he's both real and powerful!
Our only hope is to be strong in the Lord,
and the power of His might!
And put on the full armor God provides—
every piece of it!**

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either The NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1992 edition).

First Edition

December 2018

Foreword

If we come to God's Word with a preconceived idea of what we are going to find and how long it is going to take to understand it, we are often going to be in for a surprise. That is exactly what happened to me when I came to the closing verses of the book of Ephesians. I had forgotten that the Word of God is an inexhaustible *gold mine* of truth for the child of God.



Few things I have studied have proven to be such a source of practical truth than these last few verses in Ephesians. They are all the more the blessing for the unexpected depth and richness of what God has preserved for us.

Truly, He knows our every need and provides accordingly.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a large, looping flourish at the end.

Kevin Redig



Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will 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; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication to all the saints--

Ephesians 6:14-18

The Armor of God

Ephesians 6:14-18

After a significant amount of preparation in Book 1, we are almost ready for the specifics regarding the *Armor of God*. We will be dealing with six pieces of equipment: the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, footwear consisting of the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. We will discuss the first four components in this booklet and the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit in the third booklet in this series.

Now, don't consider this to be an exhaustive list of what God has provided for us to stand firm against the wiles of the Devil—just a list of essentials that match nicely with the metaphor. Also note that none of these are unique to this passage, they are all mentioned frequently elsewhere in God's Word. They just make a really nice mental picture in support of our *worthy walk* in Christ. So to get us back into our study, let's look at a couple of items of preparation before we take up the belt of truth!

A Bit of Preparation

Stand therefore, . . . Ephesians 6:14

Greek Grammar

The Greek grammar of this passage indicates personal responsibilities. The first verb in the passage—*stand*—is in the active voice, meaning something we do, and the imperative mood, making it a command. All the rest of the verbs are in the middle voice which indicates something we do to ourselves. I am pointing this out because God is telling us to get ready. You can't *contract out* standing

firm and putting on each piece of the armor of God, nor can you hire a mercenary to do battle for you. One of the first things we have to learn as Christians is to:

Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you also were called.

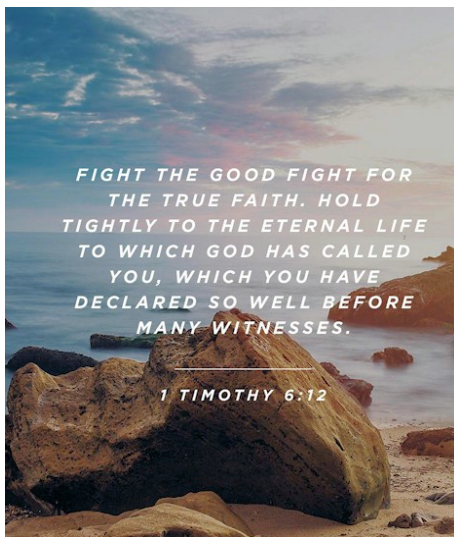
I Timothy 6:12

Passage Detail

Our passage is a blend of both the general and the specific and we need to be proficient in both. The general includes being *strong in the Lord and the power of His might*. But the Scripture becomes

more specific listing six pieces of equipment, which really represent Biblical truths in which we must place our faith and then act. Let me give you an example of *the specific*: When tempted, can we just brandish the Bible to ward off temptation? Are we able to just choose any old chapter and any verse to do battle with the incessant world viewpoint that bombards us every day? Of course not!

When Scripture tells us to "*take up the sword of the Spirit*," it is talking about taking up those portions of truth pertinent to specific circumstances. There is no better example of this than the way Jesus handled the Devil's temptation, addressing every temptation with just the right portion of Scriptural truth. Thus, we are not fully prepared to do battle if we are not regularly studying the Scriptures so that we might *rightly divide* these truths. (II Timothy 2:15).



This is also why we sit under teaching, so that we might grow up in the faith and not be *tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine*. (Ephesians 4:12-14)

Representative Components

The component parts of the armor listed in Ephesians Chapter 6 are not meant to be comprehensive, but representative. Thus, we cannot forget everything else we know! Our positional standing in Christ, the call to walk by the Spirit, and the means by which we are to recover from failure are just a few of the many truths we have to couple with the armor of Ephesians 6.

Not Related to Time

The instructions of Ephesians 6 are framed as a command not related to time. It is meant to prompt the readiness of Nehemiah that we might avoid the lapse of David. Read that again and give it some careful thought. For one common approach to teaching on the *Armor of God* is to encourage the believer to mentally put on that armor first thing every morning. This is a great idea in terms of turning our minds to the Scriptures. But now let me challenge you to think about this a bit more deeply. If you were to die in your sleep tonight, you certainly wouldn't want to have stepped out of this life without the imputed righteousness given to you by Christ, which allows you to stand before a holy God. In fact it's a good thing you can't really take that righteousness off. It is better for us to follow the pattern of Nehemiah:

Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guard with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.

Nehemiah 4:23

So, too, we need to be constantly spiritually ready, for our adversary the Devil never sleeps and never grows tired.

And here's the alternative to being spiritually ready:

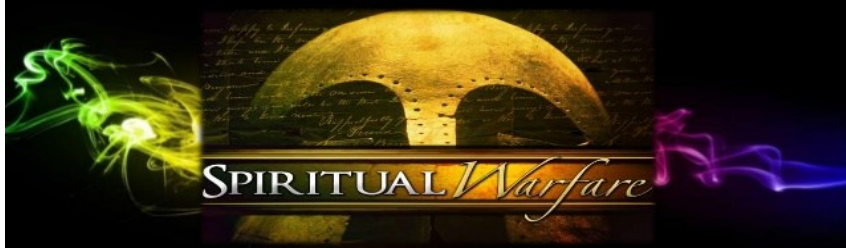
One evening, David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of his palace. . . II Samuel 11:2

Shortly after this, David spied Bathsheba and his adulterous affair and murder of her husband followed soon thereafter. Just as David was out of his routine, having stayed behind in Jerusalem while the army was in the field, we too can get out of our spiritual routine. At that point we are very susceptible to the Devil's attack and more than ever are going to have to rely on what God has provided for us in order to *stand firm!*

Depicted as Armor

Our text is built upon a metaphor in which the key provisions of God to withstand the wiles of the Devil are pictured as armor. I know you are thinking, "Obviously!" As obvious as this might seem, I mention it to you as a

6:14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,



word of caution. For we cannot really take righteousness and beat it into a breastplate. We have to, at some point, switch to the spiritual and appropriate it by faith.

Picture Paul as he was so often chained to two Roman soldiers. As he looked to the right and left, it dawned on him that right before his very eyes was an illustration of the spiritual preparation needed to stand firm in the Christian life. There are many illustrations to bring home that one truth. So when it talks about putting on faith and love as a breastplate in I Thessalonians 5:8, that's not a contradiction of Ephesians 6, it is simply another illustration. So the word of caution is that we must not push the physical analogy too far. It is the spiritual truth we are after, and we really need to build our comprehensive understanding from the totality of the Scriptures. So with that preparation in mind, let's begin our discussion of the full armor of God with the belt of truth.

The Belt of Truth

Stand therefore, having girded your loins (waist) with truth. . . Ephesians 6:14

Understanding the Language

Girding one's loins sounds strange to our ears, but it is really a call to be ready for action. For example, look how Elijah prepared himself to outrun the chariot of King Ahab:

The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, girding up his loins (tucking his cloak into his belt), he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel. I Kings 18:46

In the New Testament, Peter applies the analogy to the mind:

Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind. . . I Peter 1:13

So, the first admonition is to get ourselves ready for action. The second is the imagery of a wide and solid belt of leather from which other implements can be attached.

The soldiers of both Paul's day and our day wear a belt or harness from which much of their other gear is hung so that it is ready for use on short notice.

The Greek word translated truth can mean either of two things: that which is absolutely and fundamentally true; or that which was true subjectively in the eye of the beholder. So which definition do you think God, through Paul, is admonishing us to use as an anchor for the rest of the armor? Is He telling each of us to prepare to stand firm with our own version of the truth, or, do you suppose He might be thinking about His absolute truth as declared in the Scriptures? It is essential for us to understand this foundational piece of armor correctly, so let's consider it carefully.

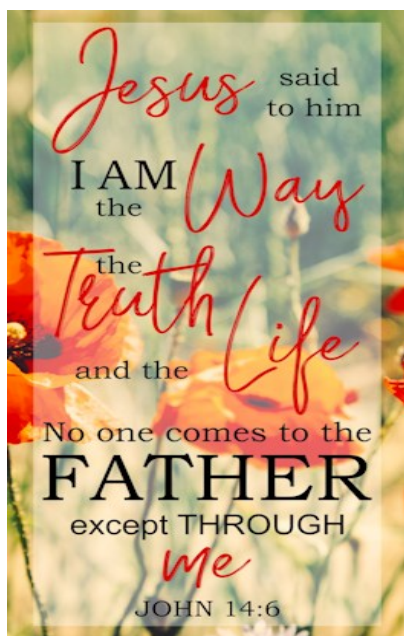
Understanding the Truth

1. Truth begins with a person.

For the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:17

These are the words of Him who is holy and true. . . Revelation 3:7

So we see that the Lord Jesus Christ was the embodiment of truth at His incarnation, and, by definition, He is that which is true within the heavenly realms.



2. Truth comes to us in one way—from God via His revelation.

Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth.

John 17:17

The Scriptures are not only clear, but they emphasize that Jesus is truth from every angle possible. The one sure foundation upon which Christians can build their lives is the Word of God as it is centered in the person of Christ! For Jesus said:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew, and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

Matthew 7:24-25

Is our foundation the Word or Jesus Christ? Both! For the Word of God is the *mind of Christ* (I Corinthians 2:16), and it is to dwell richly within us (Colossians 3:16).

3. God wants us to choose to be on the *side* of truth and to come *via* the truth!

"You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me."

John 18:37

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

John 14:6

"If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 8:31-32

Taking the above passages in concert, what do they teach us? First, truth forces us to take sides: Will you trust in Christ for your eternal salvation or will you reject Him? This is not an arbitrary decision for the truth of the matter is on the side of Christ. When Pilate walked away from Christ, he was muttering to himself, "What is truth?" He was then walking away from the One who was in Himself truth and the only One who can provide access to the Father. If we wish to know the truth fully and be impacted by what we know, we must hold to the teaching of the One in whom are all the *treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. (Colossians 2:3) That is the truth as contained in the Scriptures.

4. There shouldn't be the least bit of confusion regarding the *kind* of truth we are talking about! When we are told to *gird our loins with truth*, this is a clear reference to the absolute truth that has God as its source and is found in the revelation of God to us—His Word! Now perhaps you are thinking that would make the Word of God part of the armor of God on two counts—the belt of truth and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Good point, which leads us to our next discussion.
5. There is the *whole* truth, which is a reference to the principle of truth. Then, there is particular truth that is specifically suited to a particular set of circumstances. When the Bible says, "*Thy Word is truth*" (John 17:17) and "*All Scripture is God-breathed. . .*" (II Timothy 3:16), these are references to the entire scope of God's revelation to us. This *whole* truth is the belt that we are to fasten around our waists in order to be prepared to stand.

On the other hand, we are talking about the specific application of the Word of God to circumstances, when the Bible teaches us that:

(the Word) **divides asunder the joint and the marrow, the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

Hebrews 4:12

"Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God."

Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:4

As a point of application, it is not enough to agree in principle that the Word of God is truth from God. We must also know the particular content of the Word of God to successfully deal with the challenges which will come our way as we seek to be ambassadors for Christ in a world under the Devil's sway. For we are operating in enemy-held territory and we need to know the truth as thoroughly as possible.

6. Since the Devil is a liar and deceiver (John 8:44), is it any wonder we are told to gird ourselves with the truth? What should we anticipate to come from the Devil? He uses lies, deceit, obfuscation, confusion, and masquerades as an angel of light to counterfeit all that is real. If we aren't grounded in truth from the start, we will be a wartime casualty almost immediately.



7. The battle over truth has raged since the inception of the Church, and will continue to rage until our Lord gathers His Church to Himself.

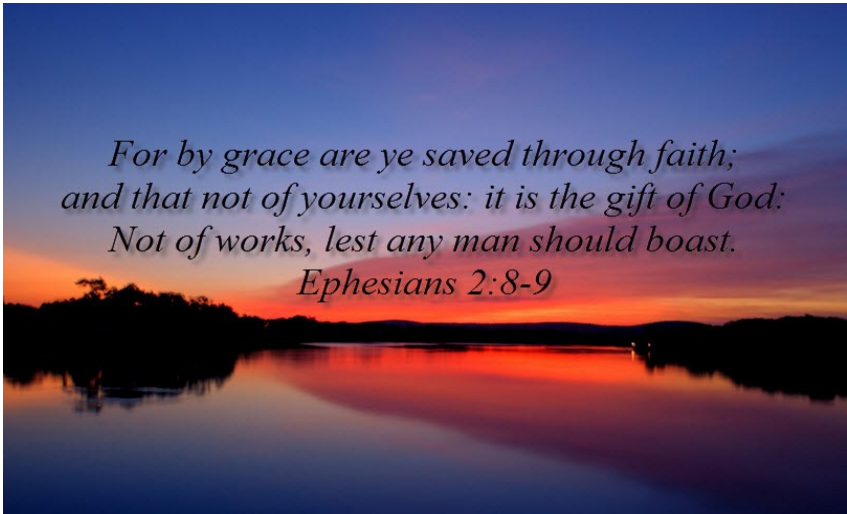
Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

Acts 15:1

Circumcision was not enough. Soon another group added keeping the entire Mosaic Law as a salvation requirement. Once you start adding works, it never stops. This was the background for the Jerusalem Council, where, thankfully, they went back to the truth of salvation by grace, through faith, and apart from works. Make no mistake about it, some attacks on the truth are going to come from inside the church.

"I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth. . ."

Acts 20:29-30



*For by grace are ye saved through faith;
and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man should boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9*

Is it any wonder that the first piece of armament we need to focus upon is the truth—to know it so thoroughly we would recognize error immediately. For many a Christian has been taken in by that which is counterfeit—something that contains just enough truth to lure them to believe a lie.

8. What does this battle for truth look like today? It takes many forms:
 - An appeal to ecumenism, which is really to promote unity at the expense of truth.
 - The elevation of autonomy (personal authority). It started in psychology and philosophy and has most certainly impacted the church. You can recognize its influence by phrases such as: be authentic—true to yourselves; your desires, whatever they are, are legitimate; your inner self needs to be free from restraint. In essence the prevailing secular message is: Be who you are as a fallen individual, not what you were meant to be as one made in the image and likeness of God. In this way, the satisfaction of the natural man is elevated to be the one way to be happy, self-actualized, and authentic. This is readily recognizable in our society, as all kinds of things once considered sinful cannot now even be publicly debated without bringing on the religious anger of the secular zealots.

Personal authority has been used by the Devil to attack the Church! It sounds something like this: “The Church is just full of phonies who won’t let me be me!” How has the Church responded? In all too many cases, it has turned to marketing gurus to help regain lost market share!

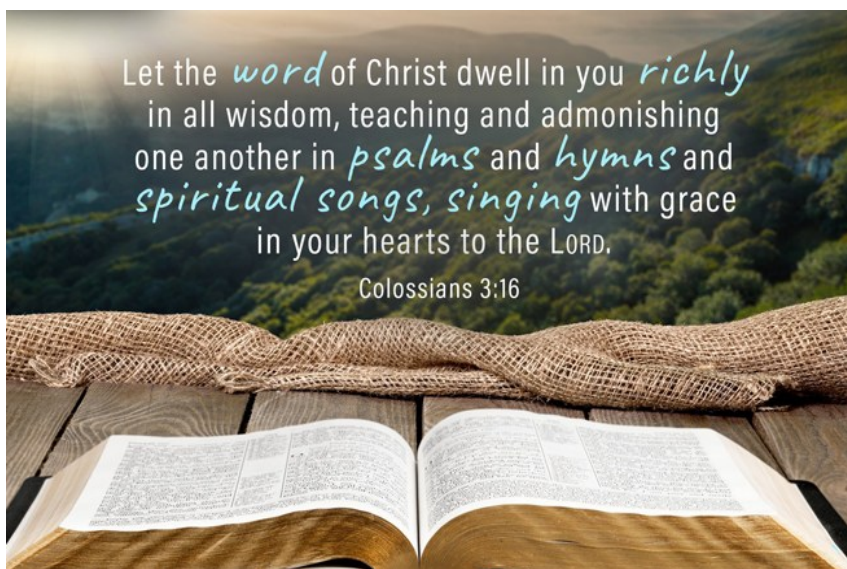
Many pastors have turned from expository verse-by-verse teaching of the Scriptures to instead focus upon musical stimulation and the felt-needs of their congregations. This isn't the kind of worship that stimulates a healthy *Fear of the Lord*; for it, instead, fans the flames of self-love. Where is objective truth to be found in all of this? One thing is for sure, nowhere nearly as many members of those congregations as needed to have buckled the belt of truth around their waists!

9. What's the antidote for the displacement of truth?

Let the Word of Christ dwell richly within you. . .

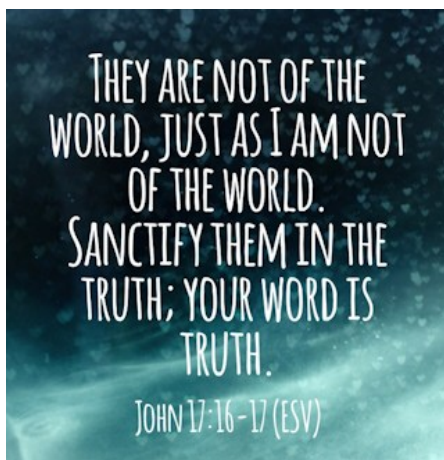
Colossians 3:16

It is my prayer that this will be our practice as a church fellowship—individually and corporately. We have chosen the Word when we turn to it for all matters of faith and practice. We have chosen richly when



we gather regularly to sit under the teaching of the Word, when we spend time in daily study of the Word, and when we allow our fellowship with each other to include iron sharpening iron as our conversations routinely turn to the truths of the Word.

You see, if God is anything, He is a source of objective truth! To think otherwise is to have lost the concept of God altogether. For He has veracity (truthfulness), He is immutable (He doesn't change), and He is perfectly righteous. Despite the claims of the modern day to the contrary, the universe is fundamentally a moral place. Truth matters! As we have seen, to be on the side of Jesus requires us to be on the side of truth.



10. Here is one way to frame the issue:

Do we accept the Bible as the Word of God, as the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice. . . Is the whole of my thinking governed by Scripture, or do I pick and choose out of Scripture and sit in judgment upon it, putting myself and modern thinking forward as the ultimate standard and authority?

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

You see the intellectual elite of our day ridicule the thought of Scripture as a source of unchanging truth from God. They present themselves as being too

sophisticated to believe such outmoded thinking and will ridicule anyone as an unsophisticated simpleton who attempts to do so. We have a choice to make. We have to choose whose wisdom to believe.

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? . . . For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

I Corinthians 1:20,25

Jesus is equally clear in laying out the options as we can see in His lesson from Matthew 7:

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. . . But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Matthew 7:24-27

And, in fact, here is His final word on the matter:

". . . the Scripture cannot be broken. . . " John 10:35

The Promises

- ☞ All Scripture is "God-breathed" 2 Tim 3:16
- ☞ Scripture cannot be broken [wrong] Joh 10:35
- ☞ No letter or stroke shall pass away Mat 5:18
- ☞ The Spirit will guide you into all the truth Joh 16:13
- ☞ God's word is settled in heaven forever Psalm 19:89
- ☞ The word of our God will stand forever Isa 40:8
- ☞ The word of the Lord remains forever 1 Pet 1:25
- ☞ God's words bring light Psalm 119:130

So even this first piece of the Roman soldier's armor should cause us to pause and take stock. As a church fellowship may we be of one heart and mind in choosing to buckle on the belt of truth—the truth which is found in the Word of God. This truth originated in God's mind. He has revealed it to us and then preserved it through the centuries in the Bible. What a treasure we have in the Word of God!

The Breastplate of Righteousness

. . .having put on the breastplate of righteousness. . .

Ephesians 6:14

Could this simply be a call to morality? Is it a call to live uprightly and to display exceptional character? No! Now understand that to speak against this interpretation is not to be against personal righteousness. Rather, it is to understand that whatever experiential righteousness we may have managed to achieve, whatever our level of personal integrity, that is not how we stand against the wiles of the Devil. For what we need, and what God has provided for every one of His children, is so much higher and so much more suited to spiritual warfare. Let's walk through it.

An Introduction to Righteousness

1. The repentance of Paul:

. . .not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that is from God by faith. . .

Philippians 3:9

This is Paul's own testimony about how he reached the point where he set aside his efforts to try and gain a righteous standing before God through the works of the law, and instead accepted as far superior the righteousness that comes from God as the result of faith in Christ.

2. We are taking about imputed righteousness:

. . .not imputing their trespasses to them. . .For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

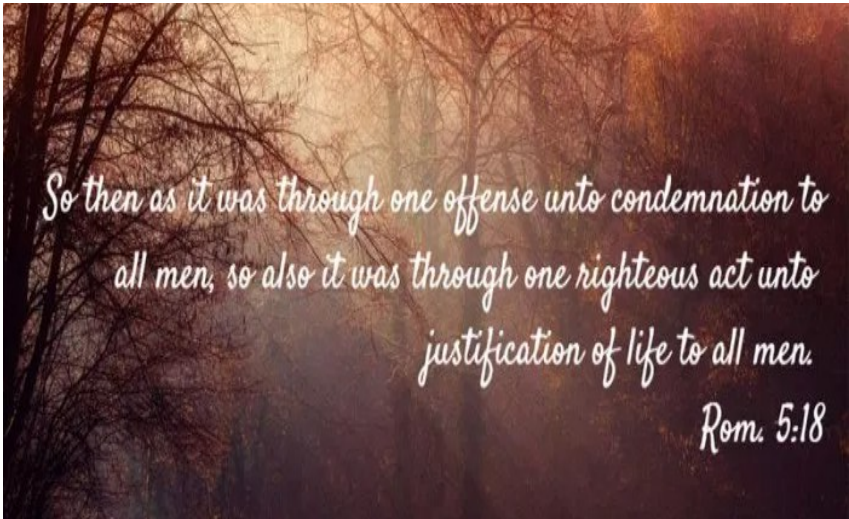
II Corinthians 5:19,21

Our sins were imputed to Christ, and in return we received His righteousness imputed to our account. No wonder we are admonished over and over again to forsake our efforts at obtaining a righteousness acceptable to God through works. Nothing we could do would ever compare with the righteousness that God imputes to us—the very righteousness of His Son!

3. We are talking about the principle of justification.

. . . even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. . . to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:22, 26



So then as it was through one offense unto condemnation to all men, so also it was through one righteous act unto justification of life to all men.

Rom. 5:18

To be justified is to be declared righteous. Faith in Christ results in the imputation of the very righteousness of God to every believer. When God sees His righteousness imputed to us, He declares us to be *justified* in His sight. Justification by faith was the great truth to come out of the Reformation, and what a marvelous truth it is!

Thus, it is clear that it is the very imputed righteousness of God that we are to *put on* as part of God's provision to stand firm. For it is His righteousness that guarantees we will always stand justified before our Holy God. Now let's take what we have just learned about the *breastplate of righteousness* and go immediately to the next piece of armor.

Gospel Footwear

. . .and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. . .

Ephesians 6:15

Notice first the word "*preparation*." In the ancient world, the adversaries of Rome would often bury sharpened stakes and cover them with a thin layer of dirt. Thus, part of the Roman soldier's armor was sturdy leather footwear with metal studs on the bottom. This footwear both protected them from the booby-traps of the enemy, as well as providing firm footing on the field of battle. Just as the ancient legionnaire needed protection, grip, and mobility, so too the Christian needs to be prepared! But what is the spiritual nature of our footwear? Certainly, the Gospel can be likened to that which carries us everywhere with a message of how lost mankind can be reconciled to God. For ***how precious are the feet of him who brings good news. . .*** but that would be to mix our figures of speech.

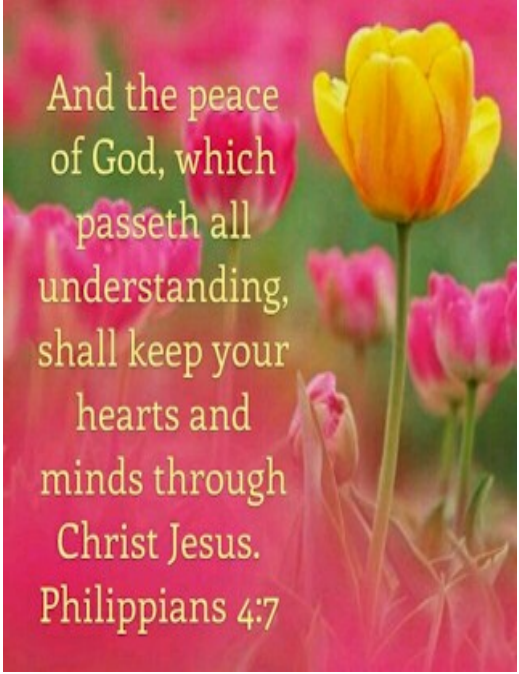
I believe that what Paul has in mind is something defensive in nature, something that will help us stand against the wiles of the Devil. We have just seen how being clothed with the very righteousness of Christ will allow us to stand against any guilt he might bring our way, but how does having our feet shod with the Gospel of peace help us to stand? I think the answer is in putting together the words *Gospel* and *peace*.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. . .

Romans 5:1

Once we fully grasp the nature of the righteousness that God has imputed to each child of God, we are ready for a more advanced lesson that includes the status that is now ours of *peace with God*. You see, part of our readiness to stand against the accuser of the brethren is to know ahead of time that we have peace with God—that we are reconciled to Him.

We are no longer an enemy in fear of His wrath, but a child clothed with His righteousness and thus able to be at rest (peace) before Him! Let's make some application.



And the peace
of God, which
passeth all
understanding,
shall keep your
hearts and
minds through
Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:7

Peace With God

1. How is any human being ever going to withstand the scrutiny of God's holiness? The answer is: By means of the provision of His righteousness imputed to us. That is what it means to be justified by faith. To be justified is to be declared righteous—in a legal sense. And, faith in Christ is how we obtain such a standing.
2. God deals with the forensic, or legal, first and then moves on to the experiential. What this means is that we receive imputed righteousness (our breastplate) and then are called to live uprightly. Imputed righteousness should always be seen as reinforcing the call to *walk worthy* of our calling in Christ. (Ephesians 4:1) For there is no possible way to condone being clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ and then living an unrighteous life.
3. When we fail experientially, at what point can we always pick up the pieces? We don't begin by promising to try harder or to make it up to God. We begin by coming back to what is ours by virtue of being *in Christ*. Specifically, we come back to the righteousness that has been imputed to us. It does not vary and we cannot lose it. For, once a person is justified before God as the result of faith in Christ, he or she has a permanent justified status!
4. If guilt doesn't get you, seasons of drought might—same breastplate, same footwear! Sometimes the maturation process is slower than we would like, and we go through what appears to be spiritually *dry* times. Take this matter up with the Lord—He will reveal to you anything that might be hindering growth.

In the meantime, He simply wants us to keep trusting Him, walking by faith, and wearing the same armor. It is His righteousness that gives us peace with our God!

5. Is there an application of having our feet shod with the Gospel of peace? Yes, but only if we have first come to understand what it means to have *peace with God!* Never again will we be labeled His enemy. To be reconciled is to change from a condition of enmity to one of peace. We don't need to perform, produce, or churn out an endless succession of good deeds in order to somehow get into His good graces. We are already there *in Christ!* To be sure, failure requires us to regain the peace of God, through confession of sin, but not peace with God. For that is a settled matter through the *Blood of Christ!*

In fact, our peace with God should really be part of our witness. For it is not unusual to meet someone who wants to run down Christianity, in general, or Christians, in particular. What do we do? Get on the offensive? Attack back? There is no need to do that and it is a terrible witness. Those who attack what the Lord is doing have their own problems. Never forget that He is going to build His Church and nothing can prevail against it.

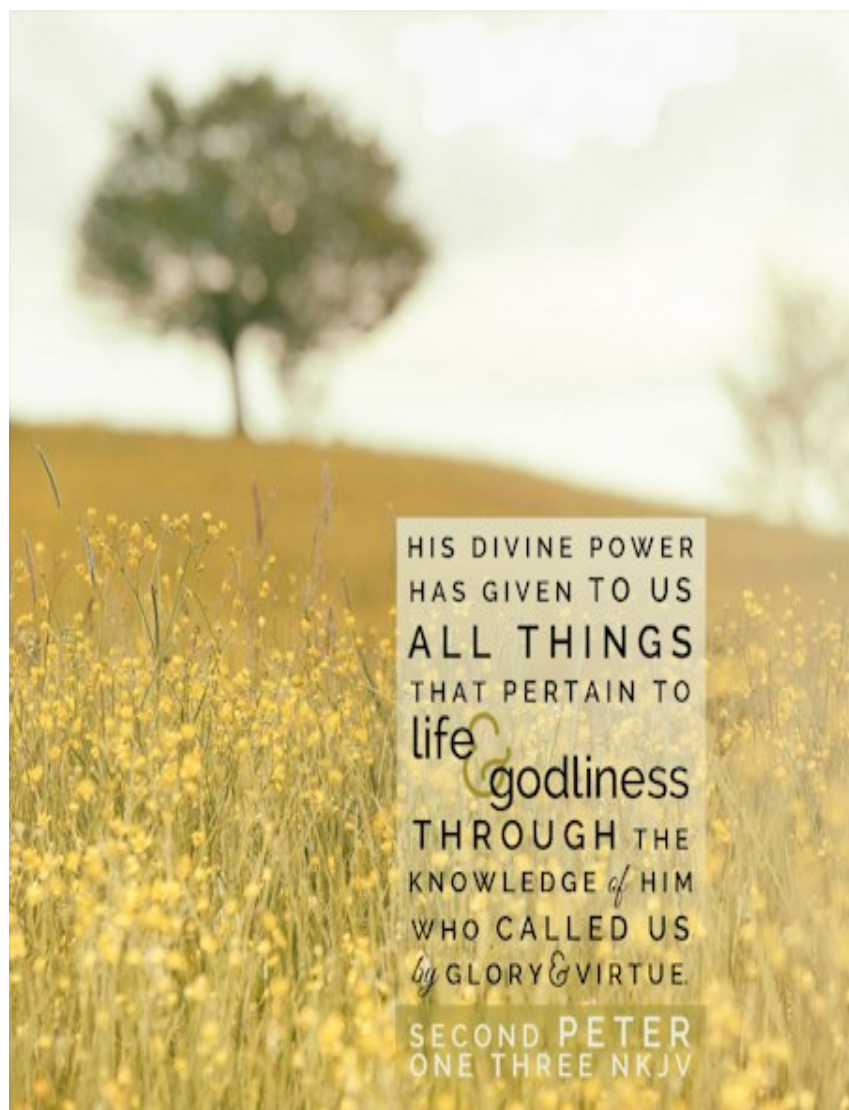
Instead, how about if we respond with the preparation that comes from the Gospel of peace. Consider a response to attacks that goes something like this:

Oh, I don't know about that, but I am so blessed by God's gift of salvation to me. So blessed to have every spiritual blessing in Christ; and to know that as my life closes, and I am one day closer to going home to be with Him for all eternity, I have peace with God through His Son.

That's our witness, and the best answer for those who want to find fault and tear down. It comes from our righteous standing before a Holy God, **and** the peace that results from being clothed with His righteousness.

The hymn-writer says it this way, "*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. . .*" One takes away and the other gives. For the blood of Christ was shed for the remission (taking away) of our sins. And, He gives His righteousness to all who will trust in Him. That's what every single one of us needs more than anything else—our sin to be taken away and replaced with a righteousness that will stand His scrutiny. If you are still trying to make yourself acceptable through good works and good behavior, you have forgotten that the Word tells us our righteousness is but *filthy rags* before the Lord. (Isaiah 64:6) Much better to be clothed in His righteousness—a righteousness that only comes to those who will trust in the person and work of Christ and that provides blessed peace with God!





HIS DIVINE POWER
HAS GIVEN TO US
ALL THINGS
THAT PERTAIN TO
life & godliness
THROUGH THE
KNOWLEDGE *of* HIM
WHO CALLED US
by GLORY & VIRTUE.

SECOND PETER
ONE THREE NKJV

A Brief Interlude

We are well into the detail of our passage and finished discussing two of the individual components of the armor of God. Let's pause for just a moment, for we have learned enough to make several observations.

1. There are things we should realize when Scripture says, "**. . .put on the whole armor of God. . . .**"
 - First, this armor is of God and not of ourselves. There is so much human philosophy in our day, so much self-help psychology. But those are not the armor of God. In fact, they will hinder its use! We dare not turn elsewhere to find help, because His grace has supplied
. . .everything we need for life and godliness.

II Peter 1:3-4



- Notice the word *whole*. It means complete or sufficient. Again I repeat:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

II Peter 1:3-4

He has overlooked nothing. There is no *Achilles heel* in what He has provided.

Then, there is another perspective we need to have on this word *whole*. Paul is explaining that God has covered every detail—nothing is left out—when he says in Acts 20:

Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. . .

Acts 20:26-27

By application, in our study of the *whole* armor of God, we need to make sure that we leave nothing out. For we cannot afford to ignore even one portion or aspect of what God has provided for us, lest we have a *weak spot* which the Devil can exploit.

2. God's armor is more than able to rebuff every attack, but not everyone can wear it! As we continue to study this text, you are going to recognize how important this is for those who naturally occupy your mind—children, grandchildren, and other loved ones.

But, we must realize the applicability of this armor. This is a spiritual armor we are studying and it is only designed for a spiritual person. Lost persons, struggling for acceptance or with guilt, cannot address their needs by putting on this armor. They have a greater need of first changing kingdoms—from darkness to light. They must first become new creatures in Christ by turning to Him in faith. A similar situation applies to carnal Christians—ones who have become entangled in the temptations of this world. They too cannot address their greatest need by putting on the armor of God, they must start by dealing with the sin in their lives. Once restored to fellowship, they are ready to begin walking in the Spirit and putting on the full armor of God.

3. I would like to put to rest once and for all the “Your faith is a crutch!” put down. I know you’ve heard it. Those who trust in themselves look down upon those who have decided to trust in Almighty God. In their view, religious faith of any kind is for the inherently weak. To begin with, praise God others have correctly understood that we think we are inherently weak. They ridicule because they perceive our faith to be a crutch. In their imaginations, they are superior because they don’t need any such thing.

Have you realized how this passage in Ephesians sets the record straight and gives us great encouragement? For we stand in the middle of a battlefield. The fiery darts of our adversaries fill the air. God hasn’t given us a crutch, but a perfectly matched set of armor that will allow us to stand against any and every onslaught of the enemy. What do those who ridicule faith in God have as an alternative? There they stand, ridiculing what we have in Christ, clothed with a blindfold:

The God of this age (the Devil) has blinded the minds of unbelievers. . .

II Corinthians 4:4

They are completely unprotected! I can assure you, that is absolutely not the condition in which you want to be standing in the middle of an active battlefield—blindfolded and otherwise naked! We don’t have a problem, they do. So keep right on giving them the Gospel that they might be brought over to the Kingdom of the Son, and, in that way, they can get some protective clothing as well. For they too, if they but believe, would then be able to *put on* the full armor of God. In short, as we rightly divide the Word of God, we should be able to laugh off the ridicule of the world.

The Shield of Faith

We return to our piece-by-piece analysis of the armor with a discussion of the shield of faith:

...above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Ephesians 6:16

At this point, I could tell you that you need to get out there and live by faith! What Christian is going to argue with that? But, at the same time, how is such an admonition going to help us stand more firmly in enemy-held territory? So let's see if we can develop more deeply our understanding of the Christian's walk of faith.

First, consider the physical analog. The Roman soldier's shield had a wooden frame and was covered with the hide

of some kind of animal—think of tough rawhide. The Romans also put a thin metal covering over the skin so that it wouldn't catch fire. This shield was big enough that you could get the majority of your body behind it. So then, what are the spiritual principles that Paul is trying to get across through bringing this kind of shield to mind? Let me suggest three:

- The issue of faith!
- The *fiery darts*. What are they and how do we quench them?
- And what about the turn of phrase: *above all, taking (up)?*



The Issue of Faith!

Faith is a very deep and broad subject, and so it is good to constantly be reminded of both what we already know as well as new facets of this immensely important topic.

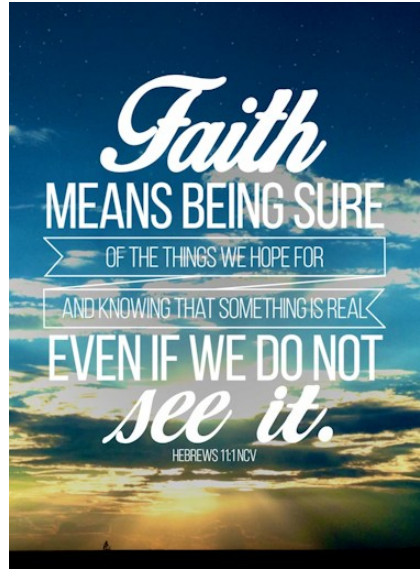
1. **Faith defined.** We get something very close to a definition of faith in Hebrews Chapter 11.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

The word translated “*faith*” has a verb form which means *to believe* or *to exercise faith in*. I mention this because in the Greek language, the words translated into

English as *faith* and *believe* are very similar in form and sound. They are basically a noun form and a verb of the same concept—to believe or to have faith.

Now, although this is a helpful verse, the language is difficult to decipher. Two things will help. First, the word translated *substance* carries the idea of having something of significance. One Greek scholar translates this word as *holding title*. In other words, when we persist in faith, and the object is truth, we own that truth. Second, the word hope is pretty wishy-washy in English. The Greek word is nothing of the sort, for it



carries the idea of a confident expectation. So perhaps the following loose paraphrase of Hebrews 11:1 will help:

Now faith is holding title, in a confident expectant manner, as the result of having evidence of things beyond the physical realm.

2. As Christians, the object of our faith is critical! Having faith for faith's sake is useless. Faith needs to have an object that is both grounded in truth and trustworthy in order for it to bring blessing into our lives. Consider Romans 10:17:

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

One of the most illuminating connections we can make in our study of the Word of God is the connection between Hebrews 11:1 and Romans 10:17. We have just learned through our discussion of Hebrews 11:1 what it means to have faith—to trust such that you confidently hold title to something. In Romans 10:17, we learn what that something has to be—the Word of God!

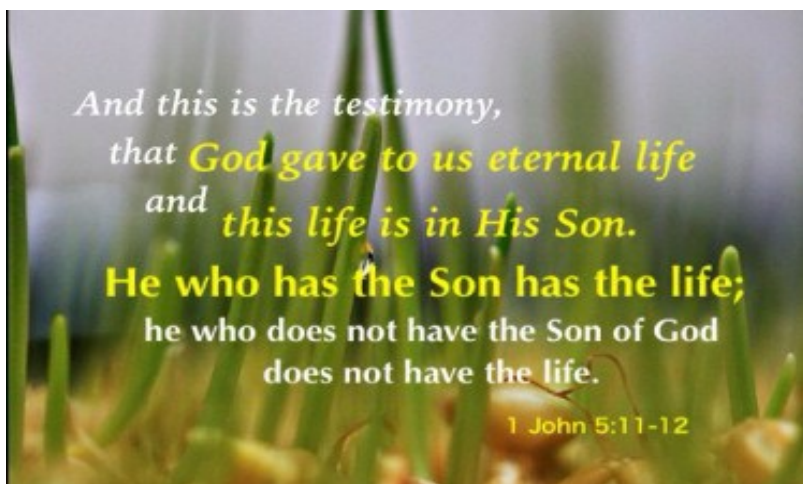
As an equally important corollary, the kind of faith we are meant to have as Christians will never be developed apart from regular intake of the Word of God. You see, we really only hold title to something of value when we are holding a truth from God's Word—everything else is going to pass away. You may hold title to a very nice car, home, or piece of property, but these are no comparison with holding title to the truth. For example, consider the issue of knowing whether or not you have eternal life. You see, it is possible to

hold title in a confident manner such that you know you have eternal life. How could anyone know for sure? Because the Word of God says:

. . .whoever believes in Him (Jesus) should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

. . .he who has the Son has life. I John 5:12

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. I John 5:13



You heard the Word of God, it caused you to respond in belief and now you hold title to eternal life! If you have doubts, go back to the Word of God in order to stimulate your faith that you would "*know that you have eternal life.*" And, I can tell you this, anything else to which we hold title is going to pass away, but holding title to eternal life as laid out in the Word of God, that's another matter entirely. So as a point of application, we need to sit under the teaching of God's Word as much as possible so that our faith would be

stimulated. We need to study in order to hold title to one promise after another and build the kind of confidence in the midst of spiritual warfare that only the Christian can have. I know that *"in all things God works for the good of those who love Him. . ."* because He made that clear in Romans 8:28. I know that He hasn't given up on me despite my repeated failures because, *"He who began a good work in (me) will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 1:6)

When people say to me, "I just don't have your faith," I know exactly what's happened. They have no relationship with the Word of God. That's because the Devil has been so successful at undermining the validity and authority of God's Word that even many Christians do not see it as it really is—our one sufficient source for all matters of faith and practice.

3. Faith is what the ancients were commended for.

This (faith) is what the ancients were commended for. . . Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 11:2,16

They were commended for having the faith described in Hebrews 11:1, which we studied at the beginning of this section. God has always wanted a people who are dependent upon Him, a people who will walk by faith in Him and His revelation to us! That's what allowed Abraham to be called the *"friend of God,"* and what will help us stand firm in the midst of spiritual battles in our day. It is this simple, this is what we want to hear from our Lord and Savior:

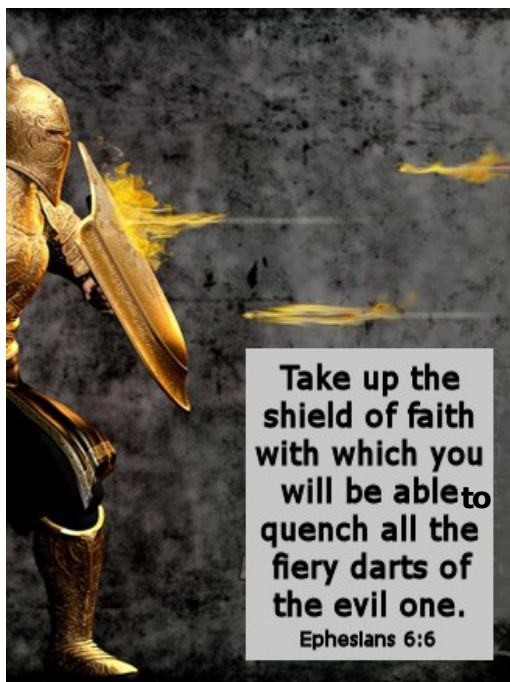
"Well-done good and faithful servant."

Matthew 25:21

Now, let's ask the very important follow-up question: "What would cause God to be ashamed rather than commend?" Let me suggest that a people without faith—a people who do not place a proper value on His Word—would cause God to be ashamed.

In summary, faith is God's call upon His people to choose to trust. Our trust is not founded upon reason, or our experience, although these things may stimulate faith or help us to apply it. Rather, the Christian's faith is grounded solely in the nature of God and His revelation to us. Can you name things that are received *by faith*? How about: eternal life, justification, assurance, acceptance, sanctification, commendation. And, this list is only scratching the surface, there are many more!

The Fiery Darts



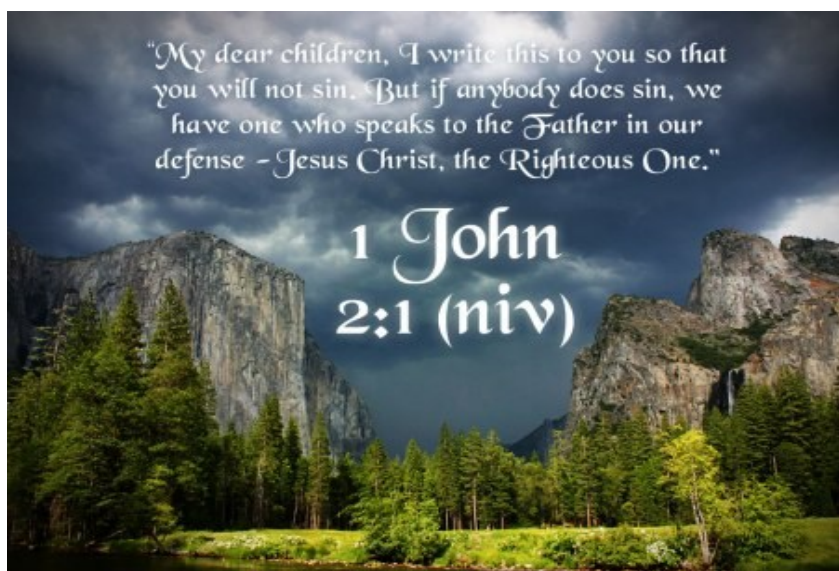
What are the *fiery darts*, and how do we quench them? Again, this is a broad topic because the Devil has many modes of attack. But, as we will see, the answer always involves turning to, and trusting in, the promises of God.

So think of the following list as a sampling that should help you to make application within your own life.

1. There are fiery darts related to temptation:

Do not love the world or anything in the world . . . For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. I John 2:15-16

You see, the Devil stands behind this world system, and he knows just the kinds of visual things to stimulate lust, just the kinds of excesses to stimulate the cravings of our sin nature, and how to turn the God-given capabilities of man into pride of self. All these are elevated by the world in which we live, and are used to tempt us away from the worthy walk to which we have been called.



2. Then there are the fiery darts of anxiety, fear, guilt, and unbelief or doubt. Consider how common are all of these, and yet in context something to be avoided by the child of God.

ANXIETY: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, with prayer and supplication. . .

Philippians 4:6-7

FEAR: But perfect love drives out fear. . . I John 4:18

GUILT: But if anyone does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense. . . I John 2:1

DOUBTS: Whatever is not of faith is sin. . .

Romans 14:23

3. How do we *quench* these fiery darts, be they the overt temptations that come our way or the more subtle mental attitude failures like worry and guilt? The answer is that we must understand faith has a *quenching* effect on all such things. We know God's righteous ones are to walk by faith, and that faith is necessary to please Him. But to help us come to grips with this in a more powerful way, consider the quenching power of faith as displayed in the following two passages.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:28-31

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

Hebrew 4:11

The word translated *hope* in the passage from Isaiah has an interesting background. It means to gather together, or even to twist together as in making a

strong yarn or rope. You see, it is those who *hope* in the Lord that will renew their strength. Those who will renew their strength are those who, in a moment of temptation or personal struggle, will gather together the promises contained throughout the Word of God and figuratively twist them together in their thinking so that they might stimulate their faith.

Add to that the passage from Hebrews that admonishes us to diligently do exactly what Isaiah suggests, and to do so for the purpose that we might enter the rest of God.

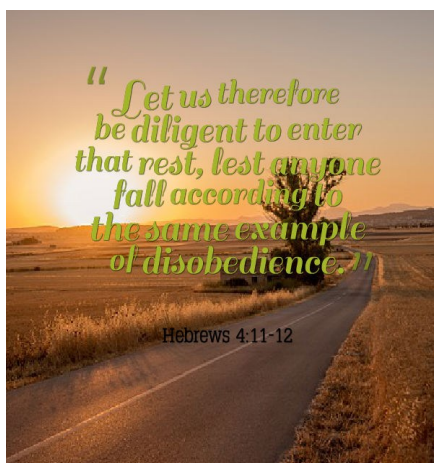
How can a person *be diligent to rest*? The answer is by being diligent to bind together the promises of God so that you can overcome temptation or worry and come to the place where you are simply *resting* in the promises of God.

To fail to do so leaves us open to both moral and mental fiery darts that are sure to come our way.

The shield of faith is God's provision, for notice how His provision of "*everything*" is directly connected to His promises:

For His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness . . . He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

II Peter 1:3-4



Above All, Taking Up . . .

Before we leave the topic of faith, let's spend a bit of time on the turn of Phrase: ". . .*above all, taking up*. . ."

1. God's provision is absolutely complete! It is the knowing and taking-up that is lacking.

. . .His divine power had given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. . .by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

II Peter 1:3-4

This is an extraordinary Scripture—not only for what it explicitly tells us, but for how it clearly establishes our responsibility. God has given us everything we need! That's grace. The means is His exceedingly great and precious promises. These, of course, are contained in the Word of God—over 7000 of them. First, our responsibility is to know the promises, and, second, to trust in them as circumstances require. What is the result if we do? We escape the corruption of the world. In short, faith extinguishes the fiery darts of the evil one. But we need to know and apply the promises.

2. Think about this question: Is there anything more definitive regarding failure in the Christian Life than a lack of faith? Consider these examples:
 - Adam and Eve listened to the lies of the Devil rather than trusting in the truthfulness and provision of their Creator.
 - The Exodus generation always panicked over their circumstances rather than trusting in the promises of God. Their lack of faith resulted in 40 years of wandering in the wilderness for them.

- The Jews at the First Coming of Christ crucified their long-promised Savior.
 - Mankind during the Tribulation when the Bible tells us that some will beg for death rather than believe!
3. To counter the depressing failure of the above examples, is there anything more noteworthy than these examples of faith in practice?
- Consider Abraham, who was declared righteous before God when he believed the promises of God. Then later he was justified before men when he was willing to sacrifice his Son Isaac in obedience to God—knowing His God could raise Isaac from the dead.
 - Job who, in the face of such great undeserved suffering, over and over again expresses his faith in God.

“. . .I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth.” Job 19:25

- Don't forget the Roman Centurion who caused Jesus to be astonished, and say:

“I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.”



Matthew 8:10

- Finally, what a blessing it will be for those who one day hear from the Lord Himself:

"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Matthew 25:21

4. Don't miss the message included in the word "*stand*" and the defensive nature of the metaphor. What I mean by this is that we are not so much thinking of going on the attack, but of standing firm. And our shield of faith is what allows us to block the temptation and mental attitude challenges that come our way. Consider Isaiah 30:15:

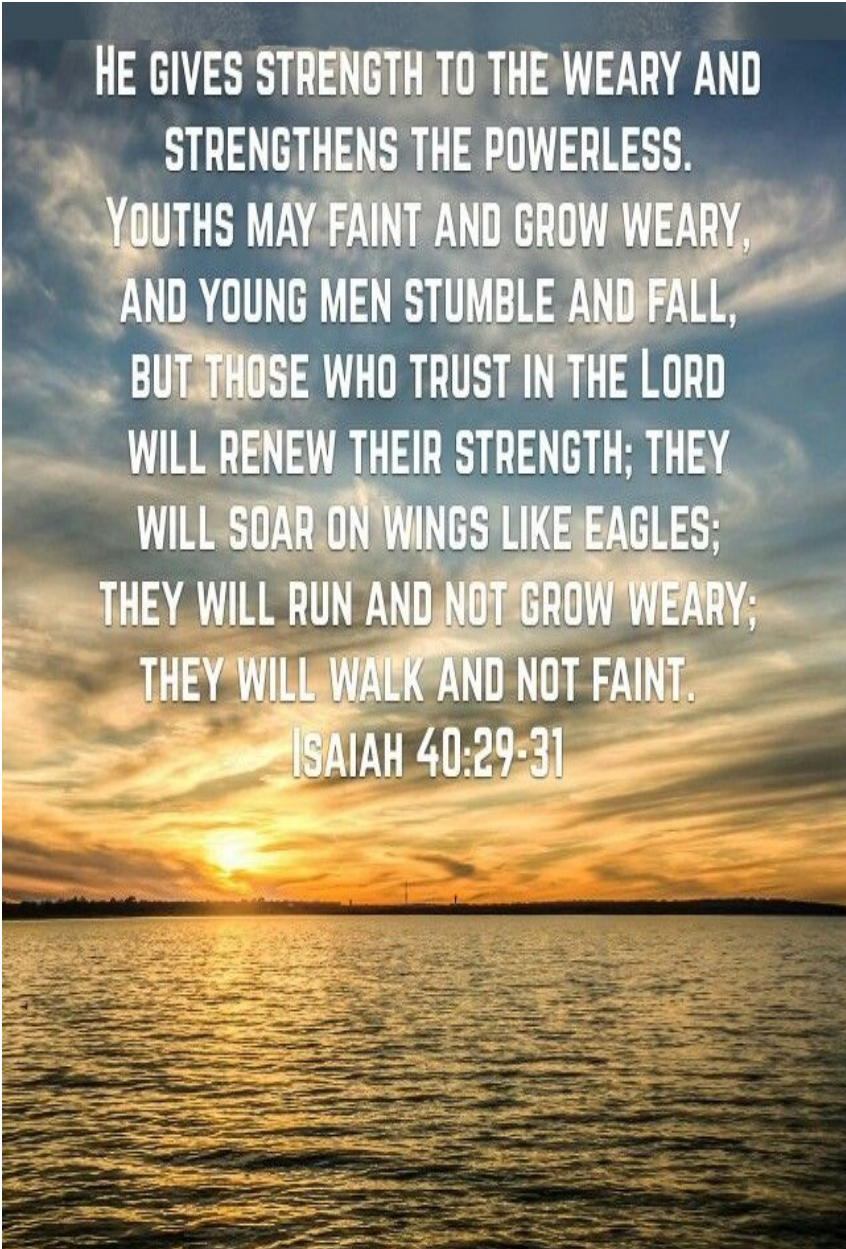
This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength. . ."



Deliverance (salvation) comes when we turn our minds from human or worldly viewpoint to Divine Viewpoint—and then rest in that truth. We don't have to be bold and brash, but quietly and firmly holding fast within our souls to the promises of God's Word. That's our strength in the Christian Life!

5. It all boils down to this: It is possible to be justified and defenseless; it is possible to have peace with God and succumb to temptation; it is possible to be seated with Christ in the heavenly realms and yet walk unworthily. Much as we might not want to admit it, there are most certainly Biblical examples of each of these situations. How do we avoid these potential catastrophes? How do we prepare ourselves to stand firm? We've just learned part of the answer. Faith is the *modus operandi* of the Christian: to learn to live dependently upon the Sovereign, Omnipotent, Loving Creator of all things is what keeps us safe in enemy territory—individually and perhaps even more so corporately!

We have just a few more pieces of armor to go, and then a few surprising additions to complete our readiness for spiritual battle and to be "*strong in the Lord and the power of His might!*" (Ephesians 6:10) You will find these topics in our third booklet. I trust you have been blessed by this booklet and are looking forward to the third and final booklet in this series.

A sunset over a body of water with a cloudy sky. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow across the water and sky. The clouds are layered, with some catching the light and others in shadow. The water in the foreground is dark with small, shimmering highlights from the setting sun.

HE GIVES STRENGTH TO THE WEARY AND
STRENGTHENS THE POWERLESS.
YOUTHS MAY FAINT AND GROW WEARY,
AND YOUNG MEN STUMBLE AND FALL,
BUT THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE LORD
WILL RENEW THEIR STRENGTH; THEY
WILL SOAR ON WINGS LIKE EAGLES;
THEY WILL RUN AND NOT GROW WEARY;
THEY WILL WALK AND NOT FAINT.
ISAIAH 40:29-31



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