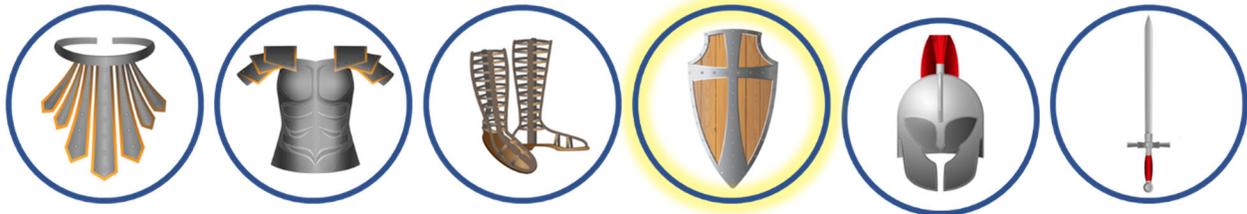




Being Prepared for Battle

Lesson #4 – Shield of Faith

Thursday, February 2, 2023 | MBC Men's Group



Series Overview

As in the battlefields of yesterday, there are winners and there are losers; those who survive and those who die. Often, those who won did so because they were better prepared than their enemy because they had the skills, know-how, passion, and tools to be victorious. In the battle for Christianity, we are offered a similar choice – to be prepared for battle or not.

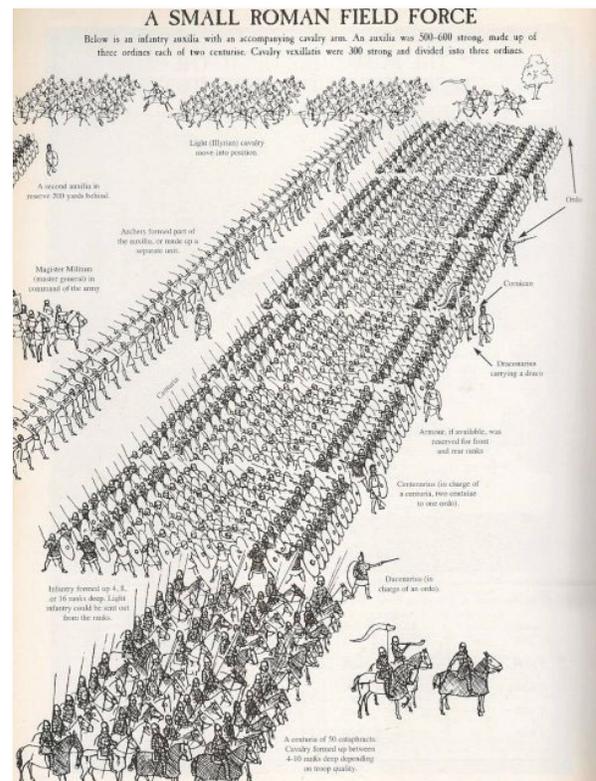
In this series we'll explore Ephesians 6 where Paul does a masterful job laying out the elements of what we call **The Full Armor of God**. Nowhere in the New Testament does a writer so clearly outline the battle gear required for every Christian warrior, including the (1) belt of truth, (2) breastplate of righteousness, (3) feet fitted with readiness, (4) shield of faith, (5) helmet of salvation, and the (6) sword of the Spirit that is the Word of God. Ironically, of the six provided elements, only one was offensive (i.e., sword of the Spirit).

Tonight's Overview

Tonight, we're going to discuss the **fourth element** of The Full Armor of God – **the shield of faith**. Faith is one of the most defining characteristics of a mature Believer. Faith defines our confidence in God and our trust in believing His words. When we truly believe what God says it will impact the decisions we make, what we choose to do, and our ability to overcome sin.

It's interesting that Paul is very specific in this armor element when he states in verse 16, **"In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."**

If you've studied ancient battles or seen movies like *Gladiator* or *King Arthur*, you know that the arrows of the archer were deadly. The purpose of the archer was to **destroy, disorient, and discourage** opposing troops. In modern warfare, the archer is represented by the Artillery. The battle is always won by the Infantry, but the artillery "softens up" the opposition. A very effective team of archers could make the job of the Infantry far easier. Paul's analogy is spot-on.



THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD



Satan has watched mankind from the beginning (literally Creation!). He knows if he can discourage us to the point where we lose hope, our impact for Jesus will be minimal. Just as in ancient times, a highly motivated army was extremely difficult to defeat, but a discouraged army would be “easy pickings” for an opposing force.

When you and I have strong faith and confidence in God’s plan for our lives, Satan’s arrows cannot penetrate our “shield of faith.” In many regards faith can be seen as a muscle – the more we exercise our faith, the larger it grows. What are some things we can do to grow our faith?

Listed below are a few ideas for consideration for helping us grow our faith.

- **Study the Bible.** This almost seems like a “no brainer” for Christians, but it’s amazing how little time many Believers spend in the Bible. Not only does our confidence in God increase the more we know about Him through His Word, but as we study the historical aspects of the Bible we see firsthand what happens when people were obedient or disobedient. We also see God’s promises fulfilled in Scripture.
- **Pray Expecting God’s Answer.** When we pray, we need to be specific. As we see God answer our prayers, our confidence in Him will increase (James 5:13). The more specific the better because we can see a direct correlation between what we pray and what we observe in answered prayers. God is also honored by our BOLD prayers. We serve a big God and our prayer need to reflect His awesomeness.
- **Spend Time with Mature Believers.** There is nothing more powerful than the life of a mature follower of Jesus. These seasoned Believers (of whom you might be one) can tell you countless stories of how they have experienced God’s faithfulness and seen His Hand directly in their lives.- Our faith is increased when we hear stories of how God has grown the faith of others. This is one of the main purposes of the church.
- **Take Risks for God.** Just like an army that goes into battle will never win unless they actually go into battle, you’re impact for God will be extremely limited if you don’t actually engage in the battle. There are countless actions you can take, but a few example include giving a Bible to a co-worker, sharing the Gospel with a neighbor, giving sacrificially of your finances (i.e., 10%, 20%, or more of your income), starting a neighborhood Bible study or prayer group, or starting a ministry to serve underprivileged children. The bottom line is we need to take risks and stop playing it safe!

One of the most powerful passages in the Bible on trusting God is Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV).

⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;

⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

The ultimate aim for every Believer is **HOPE**. When we have hope, our outlook on life is positive and impactful and I would argue we’re unstoppable. Hope is rooted in Faith that is built upon Trust (as noted in Proverbs 3:5-6 and the graphic below). Faithfulness is also listed as the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), so we also recognize faith is a by-product of the Holy Spirit working in our lives.





Listed below are the Bible passages for this week.

Ephesians 6:10-18: ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV): ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV): ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Hebrews 11:1 and 11:6 (NIV): ¹ Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

James 5:13 (NIV): Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

Questions

1. Do you struggle with faith? Provide an example of a time in your life when you struggled.
2. How important is **faith** in the life of the Believer? Read Galatians 5:22-23 and discuss where it falls in the list of the Fruit of the Spirit.
3. If you were to have “perfect” faith and could step into the future with no fear, what would you do?
4. Have you ever been around someone who had great faith? List some of the things you were able to observe in their lives.
5. As American Christian men, what are some strong acts of the faith we can do to impact our nation? Do you think some of the problems we have in this country today are because men have lost hope and are not acting faithfully?

