

Shield and Sword

Ephesians 6:16-18



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FOCAL Read Responsively Ephesians 6:16-18 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. (17) **And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;**

The Christian is called of God to be a warrior. We are called to attack the works of the devil, and we are called to defend against his evil weaponry. The weapons that we carry into battle are not like those of our adversary. Satan has armed his forces with hatred, with bitterness, with angry condemnation, with a passion to inflict real and lasting harm on the servants of Christ. Those who are conscripted into Satan's army often engage in slander, backbiting, cursing, and mocking of every type. Satanic forces often escalate the battle into real martyrdom of Christians. At present around 50,000 Christians die as martyrs each year – at least, these are the cases that we *know* about - but many more die the bloodless death of slander. We are to remember that..

2 Corinthians 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare [are] not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

The weapons that we as Christians use in our battle for God's Kingdom are **not carnal, not physical** like metal sword and shield, but our weapons **are mighty through God**. When Satan's forces stormed the Garden of Gethsemane to seize Jesus the Apostle Peter unsheathed

his sword and struck at one of the attackers (**John 18:10**).

Illustrate It is significant that the Bible tells us that **Peter cut off Malchus'** right ear, and Jesus promptly undid what Peter so rashly did. When the Christian lowers himself to the same level of the unbeliever we promptly lose our audience. Christianity was not designed to be a *cut and slash* religion.

Our Founder and Savior Jesus Christ warned us that

Matthew 26:52 ... all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

When you lower yourselves so as to play Satan's evil game you will soon find yourselves wounded to the death. I have known many brothers in the Lord who, being wounded by slander or backbiting, have justified doing the same to their enemies. Dear friends, our Lord never allowed us to play such an evil game! The disciple of God's Word does not have the right to vengeance. Ancient Israel was given a civil law that stated:

Exodus 21:24-25 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, (25) Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Yet this was a function of CIVIL Law. Before the Law of "tooth and claw" was executed the defendant was tried

by a jury of his or her peers. Once guilt was established the law went into effect. No personal nor private vengeance is allowed, for God Himself is the only Avenger. The message that God clearly teaches His Church is:

Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Emphasize The call of the Christian is *not to cut off the ear of our hearers*, but to use the weapons that God has given us to lead a lost and dying world to Christ. We are not called to fight and war using steel and bitter tongue, but we are called to "Go and tell others about Jesus".

If you live by the sword, you will die by the sword. As the **Preacher C.H. Spurgeon** said¹:

"If any of us are inclined, thus, to judge and condemn, it is time that we put this mischievous spirit far from us. If we judge others, others will judge us. Two can always play at that evil game!"

Or as our Lord **Jesus Christ** said:

¹ DELIGHT IN THE ALMIGHTY NO. 1839 A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 3, 1885, BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

Matthew 7:1-2 Judge not, that ye be not judged. (2) For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged...

We as Christians would be better equipped to battle Satanic forces if we focus on the **sword and shield** that the Lord has given us. We are to carry into battle **the shield of faith** and the **Sword of the Spirit**.

When the shepherd boy **David** went into battle the Lord allowed him to meet Goliath with no more than a sling and five smooth stones. When **Gideon** went into battle the Lord allowed him to meet a vastly superior force with a three hundred man army equipped with no more than *trumpets, pitchers, and lamps* (**Judges 7:16**). When **Sennacherib the king of Assyria** attacked Israel the prayers of their **King Hezekiah** set in motion the angel of death. One hundred and eighty five thousand Assyrian men died that night, and not one weapon was raised by beleaguered Israel. Though the methods of God may seem to be madness to so called *common sense*, we need to remember that God is the Creator, God is the Controller.

The weapons *must* we carry are those which the Lord has issued us. Carry another weapon into the fray and you will find yourselves to be like the *first generation of Israel attempting to enter the Promised Land under their own power*. Do not be foolish! We carry the shield of Faith and the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. No other weapons are needed for our battle to be won, for

none other weapons are placed in our armory by our Commander.

1. The Mighty Shield of Faith

It is the function of the warrior to attack, not just to defend. We were not designed by God to sit in a fortress looking over our past victories. The Christian is designed by God **to be an overcomer**.

Dr. Adrian Rogers wrote in his book *The Incredible Power of Kingdom Authority*²

"When you were born again, you were *born to win!* With your new birth came Kingdom Authority that fitted you for victory. Kingdom Authority is the God given mandate to exercise control over the world in the Name of Jesus and under His oversight."

We were not designed by God to be overcome of the world, but we were designed by God to *go and make disciples of all men*. The main command that our Lord and Savior Jesus has given us is GO. Jesus said:

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and [that] your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

² see *Introduction*, page 1 of his book

The Christian soldier is told to **go, and bring forth much fruit**. Yet many times Christians do not seem to be bringing forth **much fruit**, nor in many cases *any fruit*. Too many believers think that once they are saved they are saved to sit on the sidelines, much like a spectator at a football game. Why is this? Our focal text offers a good explanation when it says:

FOCAL Ephesians 6:16 **Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.**

Illustrate Our text says **above all, taking the Shield of faith**. The Shield of faith must be **above all**. It must be above all doubt, above all things, above our lives, completely covering us. The Spartan warrior was feared by all other soldiers in the ancient world. The cry of the Spartan mother to her son as he went to war was “Take care that you return with your shield, or upon it”.

The ancient shield was light weight, strong, but large enough to protect the whole person. Our faith should be large enough to be **above all** – it should protect the entirety of the believer.

Your faith should guard your head. The main reason that many Christians do not **go and bring forth much fruit** is because we allow the enemy to feed us propaganda. We hear that *the world evolved over millions of years* and we take the word of the liar and fool who says “There is no God” over the Word of God our Savior.

God has said in His Word that He created all things by the word of His mouth in *six literal days* composed of *evening and morning*. The godless scientist – who was *not there when all things were made* – stands up and tells us that this is not so. Who will you believe, the godless professor or the Creator of all things? **Above all, take the Shield of faith**. The devil will whisper in your ear, “You're not good enough to get into God's Heaven. You must develop a system of *works* to retain your salvation, a *water baptism*, a *ritualistic prayer*, a *certain sacrament*.” Will you listen to the Father of Lies (**John 8:44**) or will you listen to the Shepherd of Love (**John 10:11**)? A good shield protects your head from the blow of the enemy. You may have on **the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17)**, but if your shield is not covering your head it may be chopped off at the neck. **Above all, take the Shield of faith.**

Faith not only guards the head, but *it guards the heart as well*. Faith - not *feeling* but *faith* - must be above both *head and heart*, or else you are not saved!

The Scripture says:

Romans 10:8-11 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, [even] in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; (9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath

raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (11) For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Confession comes from the *mouth which is in the head* – belief comes from the heart.

Christianity is not an *ignorant religion*, but is well reasoned and based on eye witness accounts.

Those who wrote the New Testament Scripture not only wrote about the *very real death* that Jesus went through – but most of these men *died terrible and brutal deaths* for what they had written. The early Christian was considered a *traitor to the Roman State* and, as such, was subject to all forms of torturous death. Jesus Christ our Lord was beaten so brutally that the Spirit of God prophesied of Christ:

Isaiah 50:6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

His enemies beat Him with whip and staff, His beard was torn from His face. He was nearly carried to the Cross of Calvary, thrown to the ground, nailed to the Tree, and made to suffer unto death. His death was witnessed by many, including a Roman executioner who pierced His side with a spear to *test* if He were truly dead.

John 19:34-35 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. (35) And he that saw [it] bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

When **blood and water** flowed from His side the hardened executioner knew that death had come. Then and only then could the body of our Lord be removed from that terrible stake. He was dead – finished – just as He said!

Then three days later Jesus Christ rose from the grave. This did not happen in the dark, but in the light of the morning. Jesus rose from the grave and *was seen by many*:

1 Corinthians 15:5-8 And that he was seen of {Peter}, then of the twelve: (6) After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. (7) After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. (8) And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Our faith is not based, Dear Ones, on supposition nor on

fables, but on *clear eyewitness accounts* by people who were willing to *die the most grisly of deaths*. The shield of faith must cover your head, it must be **above all**.

The **Shield of faith must cover your hearts**. Unless God the Holy Spirit has taken that Word which we preach and put it in your innermost man, you are not saved. **If you have confessed with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and believed in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.** The shield of the ancient warrior covered the whole man, and the Shield that God has given you covers all of you.

The Christian is a person saved from the inside out. That which saved you – your faith in the crucified and risen Savior – is that which you now live by. Let the world mock us, it has nothing so fine as that Shield of faith which God has given us. We have seen how the fineries of the world has cursed its inhabitants. Salvation by faith in Christ has never cursed the believer. God walks with me where ever I go. **Above all, TAKING the Shield of faith** – faith goes before me like the *pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud* went before ancient Israel.

FOCAL Ephesians 6:16 **Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.**

You need to understand, dear Christian warrior, that you

put on this armor *because* we are at war. Our enemy is not flesh and blood, but spiritual, Satanic, demoniac in nature. We wear the Christian armor *so the armor will take the blows, and not we ourselves*. Jesus told us:

Luke 21:12-18 ... they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute [you], delivering [you] up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. (13) And it shall turn to you for a testimony. (14) Settle [it] therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: (15) For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. (16) And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and [some] of you shall they cause to be put to death. (17) And ye shall be hated of all [men] for my name's sake. (18) But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

Our Lord was not telling us that we *should not be prepared in our faith* for affliction, for in another place we are told:

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with

meekness and fear:

But what Jesus was emphasizing was this: The Christian warrior *is in a war* – but you do not battle alone. The day you accepted Christ as Savior and Lord the Holy Spirit came into your lives. You were saved by faith – now live by faith. Trust that God will guide you and shield you even in the midst of the greatest fray. Jesus promised that we would be struck at, we would be betrayed by family and friends, that we might even be put to death. Many early Christians were. But we are also promised that **He our Savior, our Precious Jesus** will be with us no matter what may come. No one goes into battle with their shield strapped on their back. During the battle the shield always goes before the warrior, taking the blows in the place of he who hides behind it. Hide yourselves in Christ, trust yourselves to the Father. Remember that our faith is supposed to *bring with it victory, to bring with it overcoming*.

1 John 5:4-5 For {whosoever} is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, [even] our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Jesus Christ is *the Overcomer*. He overcame death. He overcame hell. He overcame sin. He is the Overcomer. If you have faith in the Overcomer, then you, too, will overcome all things. The great Preacher **C.H. Spurgeon** illustrates this well:

“The devil said, ‘One day you shall be poor and starve.’ ‘No,’ said the believer, handling his shield well, ‘He hath said ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;’” “bread shall be given thee and thy water shall be sure.” “Ay,” said Satan, “but thou will one day fall by the hand of the enemy.” “No,” said faith, “for I am persuaded that he that hath begun a good work in me will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” “Ay,” said Satan, “but the slander of the enemy will overturn you.” “No,” said faith, “he maketh the wrath of man to praise him; the remainder of wrath doth he restrain.” “Ay” said Satan, as he shot another arrow, “you are weak.” “Yes,” said faith, handling his shield, “but ‘my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” “Ay,” said Satan, “but thy sin is great.” “Yes,” said faith, handling the promise, “but he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.” “But,” said the enemy again, drawing his sword and thrust, “God hath cast thee off.” “No,” said faith, “he hateth putting away, he doth not cast off his people, neither doth he forsake his heritage.” “But I will have thee, after all,” said Satan. “No,” said faith, dashing the bosses in the enemy’s jaws, “He hath said, ‘I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.’”

When I was a young man I found out that our family crest was a white shield with a red stripe across its face. When I inquired why this was so I was told that our

ancestors were warriors. They went into battle with a white shield then, once they killed the enemy, they knelt and dipped their hand in his blood and wiped it across that shield. This may be a bold family crest, but it is not the BEST family crest.

The Christian's crest is not the blood of our fallen enemy, but the BLOOD of Calvary.

Jesus Christ fought and won a battle that we had no hope of winning. He lay down His life for us, then rose from that grave to ever lead us against our spiritual foe. It is the BLOOD of Calvary that shields us from Satan's power, the BLOOD of that old Rugged Cross that protects us from the wrath of God. Hide behind the Shield of Faith, charge the enemy with the Shield of Faith – and you will live the life of the Overcomer.

2. The Two Edged Sword of The Spirit

FOCAL Ephesians 6:17-18 ... **and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;**

In ancient Rome the *gladiator* was a slave who lived for the entertainment of others. He had no rights other than the right to die a bloody death to the cheers or jeers of the decadent crowd. If a gladiator was quick enough and

skilled enough and defended his life long enough, in time the Emperor of Rome would grant him his freedom. The gladiator was brought before the Caesar with great pomp. He then knelt at the feet of his Master. The Caesar brought out a beautifully ornate *wooden sword* and touched the gladiator's shoulders with it. The gladiator then received the wooden sword as a sign to all that he was now a freeman. The wooden sword was useless in battle. It was pretty, it was symbolic, but it had no function other than to point to the *decree of Caesar*. It was his decree and not the wooden sword that freed the gladiator from the arena of fighting and death.

Too many Christians today treat their Bibles – the written Word of God – as if it were the gladiator's *wooden sword*. The preaching of

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

has won many souls to Christ. Many have been freed from the slave market of sin by the preaching of *justification by faith*. Yet Christians freed from sin are not, like the gladiator of old, given the *wooden sword*. We are not freed from bondage to Satan and the world so that we can quit the fight. The Lord expects His freemen to remember that they are *still* His servants (**1 Corinthians 7:22-23**). The Bible you possess is not a thing, a talisman, a wooden sword to be carried around. The Bible, the Word of God, is the **Sword of the Spirit**.

It is both your offensive as well as your defensive weapon – you must learn to use it.

Listen My Beloved: there is nothing wrong with the pastor or preacher using illustrations in his sermons. I use illustrations frequently to try and explain Biblical texts. But we must remember that the Word of God is the *Sword of the Spirit*. It is not the sword of man. The illustrations we use will not replace good and strong exegesis of the Word of God.

Pastors, there was a time when I spent hours going through books of illustrations in order to make the sermon *more entertaining* for the people. If we as preachers do this we fall to grievous error. We must not let our sermons become points of amusement for our people. They have television, the newspaper, books and movies to amuse themselves with. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. It is the very power of God, the arch weapon every Christian must use, if we expect to win this world to Christ.

FOCAL Ephesians 6:17 ... **and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**

Please note that the Word of God is the Sword OF The Spirit. Preachers may be eloquent in the presentation of the Word. We may copy past masters of the pulpit in our sermon preparation. We may borrow great swelling words from Spurgeon, Stanley, Whitefield, Wesley, Rogers, and the like, But if the Spirit of God is not in our preaching nothing will happen. It is the Sword OF the Spirit. God the Holy Spirit inspired this precious Word,

He gave us this precious Book, and He alone has the ability to energize that which we preach.

When you were saved, dear Brothers, the Spirit of God indwelt you. He came to live inside you, as with all others Christians. The Holy text tells us:

Romans 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The Spirit of God is in you, the Spirit of God gifted you (**1 Corinthians 12:11**) - many of you are much more gifted than I. Yet none of that which we have can we boast on. We are saved by Grace, we are gifted by Grace, we are called by Grace, we are empowered by Grace.

This Bible is the Sword OF THE SPIRIT. We cannot preach its precepts without the empowerment of God the Holy Spirit. He wields the weapon of the Word through every preacher, through every Christian, to **pierce even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the Spirit, of the joints and of the marrow (Hebrews 4:12)**. The Word wielded by the Spirit of God has *piercing power* as well as *practical power*. God has promised us that

Isaiah 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it.

The Word *from God's mouth*, the Word yielded as the Sword of the Spirit – it has the power to pierce the hard heart of man and bring forth the New Creature.

Many Christians are afraid of witnessing because they feel that they are inadequate to the task. “Let the preacher do it, that's what we hire him for”. I tell you, My Beloved, study of the Word of God is essential for use of the Word of God, but it's not how much seminary you have that makes the difference. What matters most is both a willingness to study the Word as well as a willingness to PRAY. Look at our context:

FOCAL Ephesians 6:17-18 ... **and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (18) Praying³ always with all prayer⁴ and supplication in the Spirit,...**

Immediately following the introduction of the Sword of the Spirit you immediately see the word **praying always with all prayer**. The **Amplified Version** of the Scripture puts it this way:

Ephesians 6:18 Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit,

3 Present Middle Participle of G4336, προσεύχομαι, proseuchomai, *pros-yoo'-khom-ahē*, From G4314 and G2172; to *pray to God*, that is, *supplicate, worship*: - pray (X earnestly, for), make prayer.

4 G4335, προσευχή, proseuchē, *pros-yoo-khay'*, From G4336; *prayer (worship)*; by implication an *oratory (chapel)*: - X pray earnestly, prayer.

with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty.

...

When you approach the Sword of the Spirit, approach it after *much prayer*. Seek the Lord's face. Take the Scripture that will be preached and pray over it, asking the Lord to reveal what is needful to the flock of God. Study your Sword, prayerfully read it, seek to apply its precepts to your lives and the lives of those you love.

Each believer in America is blessed with his or her own Bible. This is not so in many of the Third World countries, but it is so here. Cherish the Sword of the Spirit, read it, prayerfully consider its content, apply it to your life.

One day each and every one of us will meet an enemy that will require skillful use of the Sword. Perhaps the enemy will be *betrayal* – a dear friend or loved one will play the role of Judas Iscariot. When sacrificed under the greed of another you will not be able to stand unless you are skilled in using that Sword. Perhaps your enemy will be *disease* – cancer, Alzheimer's, or perhaps something even more terrifying. Have you knelt in prayer to Him Who gave you this precious Sword? Can you, like the Apostle, say:

Philippians 1:21 For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain.

Even if your enemy is *death* he or she who is skilled in using the Sword of the Lord has nothing to fear. **If I die, I am better off, but if I live I live for Christ.** There is

no fear in the warrior who trusts the two edged Blade of God. God is in control, and I am His – let come what may I will trust Him.

I pray that God has touched you with His Word.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED