

THE ARMOR OF GOD

"The Shield of Faith"

Acts 6:9-7:1

- 9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)-- Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen,
- 10 but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.
- 11 Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God." [*The fiery dart was loosed from the bow.*]
- 12 So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.
- 13 They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law.
- 14 For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us."
- 15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel. (NIV)

Acts:7:1, 47-56 (NIV)

- 1 Then the high priest asked him, "Are these charges true?"
- 47 But it was Solomon who built the house for him.
- 48 "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says:
- 49 "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be?
- 50 Has not my hand made all these things?"
- 51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!
- 52 Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him--
- 53 you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."
- 54 When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.
- 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
- 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Acts 7:57-60

- 57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him,
- 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.
- 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
- 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. (NIV)

We are learning about the armor of God and spiritual warfare. The Lord Jesus, the Commander

*in Chief, Yahweh Zabaoth, knows what it means to send warriors out to die on the field of battle. Having the keys to death and Hades does not minimize his emotional involvement in the suffering of his loved ones. In Stephen's vision, he saw the Lord **standing** at the right hand of God. Stephen forgave his murderers. He remained faithful to the Lord to the end, loving not his life even unto death (Rev. 12:11).*

Eph 6:16

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (NIV)

In using the analogy of physical armor and warfare, we need to be careful not to think of the spiritual battle as a physical one; not only in methods, but also in outcome. The darts of the wicked one do not have to do with the body. We therefore cannot judge whether the dart has been extinguished or not by mere physical evidence. Victory and overcoming are not measured by our physical safety, comfort level, or popularity with the masses.

Matt 10:24-34

24 "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.

25 It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!

26 "So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.

27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.

28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. [*gehenna*- Heb, *geena*- Grk.]

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.

30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

32 "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.

33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (NIV)

*Do you suppose that the enemy knows that he cannot kill your soul? What is his aim when he shoots out the fiery darts? What does this have to do with Stephen? We are told in Ephesians to take up the shield of faith whereby we may be able to extinguish **all** the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

Acts 6:5

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. (NIV)

Stephen was a man full of faith. The Amplified Bible reads, "a man full of faith (a strong and welcome belief that Jesus is the Messiah)." This is the corner stone of all faith, for Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith.

Heb 12:1-3

- 1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
- 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. (NKJ)

This admonition comes after the great hall of fame of faith in Hebrew 11. No one exhibited faith like Jesus. Without his perfecting work of faith (total obedience to the Father up to and including death) the faith of all the others listed in Hebrews 11 would have been in vain. We are to consider the hostility that he endured (remember, a servant is not above his master) lest we become weary and discouraged in our souls!

The shield of faith is the front line of our defense. In front of the truth guarding our fruitfulness and holding our other armor; before the righteousness that guards our hearts from spiritual defilement, above the shoes that transport the gospel of peace, and over which our salvation peers resides the sure faith that Jesus has died for all and in Him we have put our trust.

When the arrows fly, and they will, what is first called into question is, "Is He your deliverer? Will your God save you? Is he indeed the rewarder of those who diligently seek him?"

Eph 6:16

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (NIV)

The Roman shield was very different from the shields of the previous military power that they had subdued. The Greeks had used shield that were smaller and round which could be used with great dexterity in hand-to-hand combat. The Romans carried a long, rectangular, knees-to-chin shield which protected them spears and could be knelt behind during arrow barrages. Enemies who had never encountered the Legion before would make fun of these small men who were carrying what looked more like a door than shield.

As a matter-of-fact, the Greek word translated shield in this verse is thureos from the root word thura, which means door.

Faith is not only our means of entering in, but also our means of going out. The Bible tells us that whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

The shield was built of laminated plywood (two to three layers) laid at 90 degrees to each other.

Over this was stretched a wetted piece of leather tied around the edge with rawhide and shrunk into place. Some were edged with a copper alloy binding and all had a single, horizontal handgrip protected by a central iron or copper alloy boss. The whole affair was a heavy and seemingly unwieldy piece of equipment.

Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus wrote Epitome of Military Science between 371-392 AD. This work documented the training methods and rules of war used by the Roman Legion during its glory days. It was the most influential military tract in the Western world until the 19th century. Among his more memorable quotes are:

"Let him who desires peace prepare for war."

"Few men are born naturally brave; hard work and good training makes many so."

"An army is improved by work and enfeebled by inactivity."

"A soldier should never be led into battle unless you have made trial of him first."

"Never lead forth a soldier to a general engagement except when you see that he expects victory."

"Soldiers are corrected by fear and punishment in camp, on campaign hope and rewards make them behave better."

In the KJV, the verse reads, "wherewith ye shall be able." In the Greek it is the word δυνήσεσθε - 2 περσον πληρυν φυτυρε ινδιξατίε. The future tense implies a training period prior to the conflict.

Vegetius states that recruits were trained with a wood-framed wicker shield and a wooden foil each weighing twice as much as the real thing. The recruit trained with these against a stake sunk fast into the ground and standing six foot high. When the soldier became proficient with the practice armor, he was much more nimble with the real battle armor.

But the strength of the shield wasn't just in personal protection during hand-to-hand combat. As a siege weapon in the army, it was a mobile fortress. The soldiers were trained to march in step. While the front line held their shields forward, those in the rear held their shields over their heads and thus formed the testudo, or the turtle. Under the protection of these heavy shields, entire cohorts (300 to 600 men) could move forward against an enemy position that was raining arrows on them.

Faith is vital for the individual, for without faith it is impossible to please God. But the faith of the army together makes for mighty victories.

Lev 26:7-8

7 You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you.

8 Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your

enemies will fall by the sword before you. (NIV)

The amassing of faith causes an exponential effect. Five chasing one hundred is a 1/20 ratio. One hundred chasing ten thousand is a 1/100 ratio. And remember, you plus God equals a majority!

How does God train us in faith?

Heb 12:4-14

- 4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.
- 5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
- 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."
- 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?
- 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.
- 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!
- 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.
- 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.
- 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.
- 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.
- 14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (NIV)

The Lord's words of chastisement are fiery arrows that pierce the heart and burn away the dross of sin in our lives. He desires to make us holy so that we may see him. The shield of faith is given to us to stop the fiery darts of the wicked. But that trust in the Lord as our strong tower is build with the sure knowledge that he disciplines us in love to produce righteousness and peace.

Ps 7:7-13

- 7 Let the assembled peoples gather around you. Rule over them from on high;
- 8 let the LORD judge the peoples. Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High.
- 9 O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure.
- 10 My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.
- 11 God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day.
- 12 If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword; he will bend and string his bow.
- 13 He has prepared his deadly weapons; he makes ready his flaming arrows. (NIV)

Ps 120:1-4

- 1 I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me.

- 2 Save me, O LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues.
- 3 What will he do to you, and what more besides, O deceitful tongue?
- 4 He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows, with burning coals of the broom tree. (NIV)

Flaming arrows are assigned to God primarily. The devil's use of them is simply a perversion of the power of words. The flaming arrows of God are his just chastisement spoken forth for the sin of a people. These words can land as words, calamities, plagues, or invading armies even. The degree of punishment meted out is generally in direct relation to the degree of repentance not exhibited for the seriousness of the sin committed.

Jer 9:3-9

- 3 "They make ready their tongue like a bow, to shoot lies; it is not by truth that they triumph in the land. They go from one sin to another; they do not acknowledge me," declares the LORD.
- 4 "Beware of your friends; do not trust your brothers. For every brother is a deceiver, and every friend a slanderer.
- 5 Friend deceives friend, and no one speaks the truth. They have taught their tongues to lie; they weary themselves with sinning.
- 6 You live in the midst of deception; in their deceit they refuse to acknowledge me," declares the LORD.
- 7 Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty says: "See, I will refine and test them, for what else can I do because of the sin of my people?"
- 8 Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks with deceit. With his mouth each speaks cordially to his neighbor, but in his heart he sets a trap for him.
- 9 Should I not punish them for this?" declares the LORD. "Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?" (NIV)

Does the above sound like the good ol' US of A?

What are the fiery darts of the wicked?

Ps 57:4

I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts-- men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. (NIV)

1 Pet 5:5-11

- 5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
- 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.
- 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
- 8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.
- 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.
- 10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.
- 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. (NIV)

Job 31:29-30

29 "If I have rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune or gloated over the trouble that came to him--
30 I have not allowed my mouth to sin by invoking a curse against his life-- (NIV)

Ps 22:7

All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, (KJV)

Ps 22:7-8, 13

7 All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads:

8 "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

13 Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. (NIV)

Where and how do they attack? Verses 7 and 13 indicate that they attack with their mouths. And what they attack with their mouths is the faith of the suffering one. "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him." It is a case of "Did God really say?"

This is also how they attacked Stephen. They brought in false witnesses who lied about his profession of faith in Jesus as Messiah.

Ps 59

{For the choir director; set to Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David, when Saul sent men and they watched the house in order to kill him.} (NAU)

ALTASCHITH

The title of <Ps. 57; Ps. 58; Ps. 59; Ps. 75>: The maxim of David amidst persecutions, embodying the spirit of his psalm (Kimchi); drawn from <Deut. 9:26>, Moses' prayer, "Destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance, whom Thou hast redeemed." He used the same "destroy not" in <1 Sam. 26:9>, to Abishai, who urged him to slay Saul when in his power. We can say "destroy not" to God only when we ourselves bear no malice to our enemies. (from Fausset's Bible Dictionary)

Ps 59:1-4, 6-13

1 Deliver me from my enemies, O God; protect me from those who rise up against me.

2 Deliver me from evildoers and save me from bloodthirsty men.

3 See how they lie in wait for me! Fierce men conspire against me for no offense or sin of mine, O LORD.

4 I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me. Arise to help me; look on my plight!

6 They return at evening, snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city.

7 See what they spew from their mouths-- they spew out swords from their lips, and they say, "Who can hear us?"

8 But you, O LORD, laugh at them; you scoff at all those nations.

9 O my Strength, I watch for you; you, O God, are my fortress,

10 my loving God. God will go before me and will let me gloat over those who slander me.

11 But do not kill them, O Lord our shield, or my people will forget. In your might make them

wander about, and bring them down.

12 For the sins of their mouths, for the words of their lips, let them be caught in their pride. For the curses and lies they utter,

13 **consume** them in wrath, **consume** them till they are no more. Then it will be known to the ends of the earth that God rules over Jacob. Selah (NIV)

Vine's definition-

kalah ^3615^, "to cease, be finished, perish, be completed." This verb occurs in most Semitic languages and in all periods. In Hebrew, it occurs both in the Bible (about 210 times) and in post-biblical literature. The word does not appear in biblical Aramaic.

Basically, the word means "to cease or stop."

Negatively, "to complete" something may mean "to make it vanish" or "go away." Kalah is used in this sense in <Deut. 32:23>, when God says: "I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them." In other words, His arrows will "vanish" from His possession.

(from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)

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Deut 32:21-23

21 They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.

22 For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains.

23 "I will heap calamities upon them and **spend** my arrows against them. (NIV)

The fiery darts of the wicked one are curses. Faith in the Lord extinguishes these curses for Jesus became a curse for us by hanging on a tree.

Gal 3:13-14

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. (NIV)

Curses are a spiritual battle-

Ps 64:3-4, 8

3 They sharpen their tongues like swords and aim their words like deadly arrows.

4 They shoot from ambush at the innocent man; they shoot at him suddenly, without fear.

8 He will turn their own tongues against them and bring them to ruin; all who see them will shake their heads in scorn. (NIV)

Eccl 10:20

Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter. (KJV)

Ps 91:1-16

- 1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."
- 3 Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.
- 4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- 5 You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,
- 6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.
- 7 A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.
- 8 You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.
- 9 If you make the Most High your dwelling-- even the LORD, who is my refuge--
- 10 then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.
- 11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;
- 12 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
- 13 You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
- 14 "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
- 15 He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.
- 16 With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." (NIV)

Angels and demons are involved in this battle of words. Trusting the Lord is the surest way of having his angels cover you in the spiritual battle (v.13).

Appropriating the blood of Jesus in our lives makes it impossible for the curses of the wicked one to stick in and explode on us. With that faith before us, we can push forward against the enemy's line even as he tries an aerial assault on our position.

I Jn 5:4-8

- 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.
- 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.
- 6 This is the one who came by water and blood-- Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.
- 7 For there are three that testify:
- 8 the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. (NIV)

In terms of shield construction and upkeep, blood, water, and oil are all evident. Blood when the animal died from which the leather was taken. We are covered in the blood sacrifice of Jesus. The water was used when the hide was stretched over the shield's frame, wetted and then shrunk into place. The word of God should soak us to the point that when the fire of his spirit is applied, our lives shrink to the shape and function he has determined for us. The shields, both leather and metal, were kept protected by being rubbed with oil to keep them supple and free of rust. We are to stay in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. There is the anointing that remains (internal) and the anointing that rests (external). We need to walk in the anointing that remains to be a vessel

that will accommodate more powerfully the anointing that rests.

Ps 115:9-15

9 O house of Israel, trust in the LORD-- he is their help and shield. [*The People*]

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD-- he is their help and shield. [*The Priests*]

11 You who fear him, trust in the LORD-- he is their help and shield. [*The Proselytes*]

12 The LORD remembers us and will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron,

13 he will bless those who fear the LORD-- small and great alike.

14 May the LORD make you increase, both you and your children.

15 May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. (NIV)

"Jahve is here called the Creator of heaven and earth because the worth and magnitude of His blessing are measured thereby." (from Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament)