

Spiritual Warfare: Faith

Ephesians 6:16

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Being able to fight the spiritual battles successfully means we can go about job one: Making Disciples who make disciples. The devil loves to get under our skin, push our buttons, and even bring one crisis after another. He does this to put a separation, a stumbling block, a wall between us and Jesus. He likes nothing better than to see Christians fail. Even when it is small.

Our mission is to make disciples. Jesus gave us that command. Every disciple needs to be making disciples, so we make disciples who make disciples. It's more than just clever.

In Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus he warned that about the devil's schemes. He provided them with everything they needed. He called it the full armor of God. So, far we've discussed the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and shoes of peace. Today we are talking about the shield of faith. It's important to remember Jesus is the truth who put you in a right relationship with the Father who gives you peace.

Ephesians 6:16 (NLT) In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.

We're not talking about faith in self, another person, or institution, but faith in Jesus. Christians too easily put their faith in people. I've done this myself. I've trusted people thinking they were good. But they lied, cheated, and stole. We put our faith in celebrities and athletes. We like what they do and how they make us feel. Our culture has created idol worship of celebrities and athletes. We hang on every word they say and every thing they do. This has gone so far that people seek their fifteen minutes of glory. We've even given them a title: social influencers.

We put our faith in institutions. I'm just using this as another example. I'm thinking about universities, colleges, foundations, non-profit organizations, and even sports teams. You know what I mean, these places can do no wrong. Our faith in them extends to blindly believing everything they say and do. We want them to make us feel good. We want them to be infallible.

We may put too much faith in medicines, hospitals, and doctors. I'm guilty of thinking that a doctor can do miracles. Over the years Lonie and I have seen a lot of doctors. We've had some good results. She even announced last week the great success she had with her neuro spinal surgeon. I learned early in my life that it's Jesus who does the miracle, but may work through a doctor. I can't begin to believe that doctors, hospitals, and medicines are greater than Jesus.

We put our faith in our leaders. Our community leaders, our politicians, our military leaders, and anyone else including myself that stands in front of us and makes promises. All of us over promise from our own abilities and dreams. We can't deliver on everything that comes from our own wisdom and strength.

Faith in anything other than Jesus leaves us open to doubts. I have a lot of doubts about people. Again, throughout my life I've learned that people don't live up to their own words. There is an old expression

about the bigger they are the harder they fall. That big pedestal might look magnificent, but it can get knocked down quickly.

I don't think I'm skeptical, I'm a positive person whose second language is sarcasm. That comes from putting my faith in people only to watch them fall. It comes from seeing people for who they are frail, over inflated ideas about themselves. To put my faith in people has mostly lead to disappointment. I'm much more cautious about who I trust, and how much faith I have in them. This isn't being negative as much as it is being wiser and more careful.

You see people, including me, are not infallible and all wise. People are not all powerful capable of doing anything. People can't control their circumstances. People can't perform miracles. People can't make things out of nothing. My Jesus speaks and things come to life. Jesus has all wisdom and knowledge. He can change the circumstances. He does the miraculous. There is nothing that He can't do. I gladly wear His shield of faith.

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Faith in Jesus saves your soul, and faith protects your soul. Faith is first about a relationship. This is especially true of our relationship with Jesus. It is not wishful thinking that we are made right with God. Our salvation is guaranteed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Peace is our witness to the salvation God has provided. Truth stands forever and forever that Jesus is Lord.

This is our relationship with Jesus. Once we experience the forgiveness of our sins, the washing away of the penalty for our sin, the redemption of our soul from sin, we realize this is the greatest relationship every. There is no relationship like the relationship we have with Jesus. We are able to trust Him for all of eternity. We can put our faith in Him everyday forever and forever.

As a child, because you had good parents, you put your faith in what they said and what they did. Both their words and their actions were matching. You received their love and compassion. They supported you and helped you through life. You not only believed, but you were certain that they had your best interest in mind. Faith was automatic.

It was easy for you to put your faith in them. As you grew older you knew what they wanted without it needing to be said. The relationship had developed certain expectations. You didn't need to see them to be assured of their attitude about you. You had faith in your parents.

Not everyone had the built in I have faith in my parents situation. Too many people didn't live in such a home. Through various other relationships you experienced love, compassion, support and help. You may even call these relationships your family. The individuals taught you through life experiences about faith. You came to know that faith isn't about what you see, but it is about the things that can't be seen. Those things include: trust, hope, encouragement, discipline, and especially love.

We put our faith in them without the tangible evidence that too often gets us in trouble. Faith is about the promises we make in our relationships. Faith is maybe about the promises that are kept. Broken promises lead to broken trust and an empty faith. Promises kept are the building blocks in our relationships.

Every time you make a promise and keep it you are strengthening your relationships. Every promise that is kept makes the relationship unbreakable and trustworthy. Faith is developed and built in the relationship. This faith we have in Jesus saved your soul. This faith also is imparted to us for daily life. We have faith that Jesus hears our prayers and answers. We have faith that Jesus knows what we need before we ask. We have faith that in the midst of a disaster that Jesus is helping us. We have faith that Jesus is always with us.

There is no evidence for this faith. It is the hope of things Jesus has promised. We put our faith in Jesus because He took away our sin. We can carry our faith in front of us that one day we will be in heaven.

Revelation 20:12 (ESV)

I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

When we carry our faith so the world sees Jesus, we're testifying to the power of God. In the end, at the judgment seat of God, it will be about what our faith has caused us to do. Everyone will stand before the judgment seat of God. Books will be opened and one book will be the book of life. I believe Jesus will be holding this book and when my name is called Jesus will say, "He's mine". Every person who believes in Jesus will hear Him say the same thing. That is because we had faith in Jesus to take away our sins.

But, those who haven't trusted Jesus will find their names written in a different book. That book will list their responses throughout their lives and there will be no faith in Jesus.

Has your faith in Jesus been seen by the world when the devil attacks? This is the shield of faith we are commanded to carry as the armor of God. Is devil going to attack? Yes! Do you need to always be wearing your armor? Yes! Will you be able to stand in the midst of the attack? Yes! Will others see you standing while the devil attacks? Yes!

The world around us including family, friends, and strangers may not know a spiritual battle from a crisis or a temptation. But, they see how we respond in the midst of the crisis. They are aware of their response when tempted. Many people starting swearing and damning things and people in a crisis. While others breakdown into a lump of apathy and despair. So many people blame, and accuse, and seek revenge in a crisis.

People don't want to be this way, they know there has to be a better way. They've become so accustomed to the crisis getting the better of them that they don't know another way to respond. What they want is to be at peace in the crisis. What they want is have someone on their side in the crisis. What they want is to know why there's crisis. What they want is to be able to fight back in the crisis.

As we trust Jesus, call upon His name, live for Him we are being a witness of God's power. People are watching us. They see us as we go through the spiritual battles or what they call a crisis. We are being judged when the devil attacks. When we aren't carrying our shield of faith, that judgment made by others turns people away from Jesus.

But, when we are attacked and we are wearing the full armor of God including our shield of faith, the judgment of others is a desire for what we have. Faith is what we are holding up in front of us for the

devil to see and for the world to see. Our faith we carry strapped to us, unable to be removed. Our faith is stronger than it appears. Our faith is the power of Jesus. When we are carrying our faith in front of us and the devil attacks, we will feel the blows. But we call upon Jesus. We trust in His promises. We stand upon those promises. We are at peace. Our relationship with Jesus is tested but we believe in Him. We live in the truth that He is the Lord. People who don't know Jesus see our faith. They want the armor, the shield, and they want Jesus.

Philippians 1:27–28 (ESV) Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

Disciples of Jesus need to carry their faith so the world will see Jesus. Everyday, all day for the entirety of our lives let's carry our faith right in front of us. Make your faith part of every routine you follow during your day. From the time you wake and get dressed until the moment you fall asleep at night, carry your faith in Jesus. Make your faith part of your apparel, what people see. That is your actions. Make your faith part of your speech, what people hear coming from your mouth. That is all of your dialogue.

I believe that the greatest issues in our world are result of sinners not being able to see the faith of Christians. It's possible that we have left our faith at church on Sunday morning. We got up and brought it with us, but we take it home and leave it with our Sunday clothes. It's possible that our faith gets left in the book with our daily devotionals. We read the nice words, but then the book gets closed and we go about our day. It's possible that our faith doesn't make it to the car. We've got everything we need stacked up by the door, but we leave our faith on the table. It's possible our faith might not make it to work. We pray at home, we pray in the car, we get out lock the doors and start working but our faith isn't brought into the workplace.

I've been encouraging you to put on the whole armor of God as you get dressed: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace. I want to encourage to pick up your faith when you walk out the door of your home. You might put on a jacket, a hat, or pick up your purse or your wallet, remember to carry your faith with you. You grab your keys, if you don't you come back into the house to get them. Do the same thing with your faith. Pick it up and take it with you.

Faith in Jesus as the Son of God who died and rose from the dead to save you is the truth. Put on the truth everyday. Faith that Jesus has taken away your sin and put you into a right relationship with the faith protects your heart. Faith that Jesus has given peace that words cannot explain keeps you standing in the midst of the battles. Faith that is carried with you wherever you go empowers your life and is a witness to everyone you meet.

As a disciple of Jesus, as His follower, living in His grace carry your faith with you all the time.