

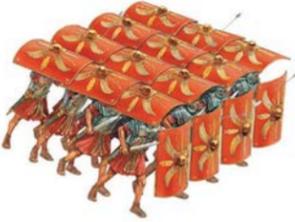
The Armor of God – Part 2

By Ray DeLea

Refresh yourself spiritually before going through Part 2 of this lesson by re-reading Ephesians 6:10-18.

Shield of Faith

In biblical times perhaps the most important armor for the soldier was his shield. It fended off arrows, spears, swords, slingshots, fireballs etc. Not only was it used for protection, but it was used as an offensive weapon to forcefully knock over enemies. The Roman *scutum* was an impressive line of defense. Because of its sheer size (3.5' x 3'), soldiers were afforded a great deal of protection from enemies. Its slight curve was able to deflect attacks without transferring the full force of the assault to the man holding the shield. Its boss was able to deflect even the more vicious blows and function in a limited offensive capacity as a means of knocking an opponent backwards. When enemies would begin firing arrows and other projectiles at the army, the soldiers would close ranks into a rectangular array—



called the *testudo*, or "tortoise," formation—and those on the outside would use their shields to create a wall around the perimeter. Then those in the middle would raise their shields over their heads to protect everyone from airborne missiles. The result was a formidable human tank that could be stopped only through a tremendous effort. Unity was important in the effective use of a shield. A lone soldier with a shield had to defend himself in 360 degrees. When combined with his fellow soldiers and their shields he minimized his vulnerability and maximized his effectiveness against the enemy.

Up until now, Paul's description of the armor of God has been limited to items we wear. We put on the belt, the breastplate and the shoes, and they essentially hold themselves up. The shield is different. Paul tells us that the shield is something we must take up, something we are required to raise. Just strapping it to our arm won't do any good at all if we don't make the effort to hold it aloft and use it. Unlike the natural military soldier, our shield is one of faith versus metal. None the less, it's makeup, spiritual, is just as real as one made of metal. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." If faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," then this has far-reaching implications. Substance is tangible, and evidence is solid proof. Faith is, by definition, not some hazy emotion without any grounding in reality. It is the irrefutable truth. It is *real*.

What exactly does the shield of faith do?

1. A shield guards. While a physical shield protects us physically, faith can protect our spiritual lives even in the middle of physical trials. When Satan attacked the values and beliefs of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in Daniel 3, they were able to stand resolute and unwavering because of their faith.
2. A shield deflects. Satan is always hurling his fiery darts of fear, doubt and worry in our direction, but the only time they can hit us is when we let our shield of faith down—when we stop believing that God is in control; that He is working everything out for our good; that whatever happens is for the ultimate best of everyone involved, however little it seems to be that way.
3. A shield is the first line of defense. While the rest of our armor helps protect us from Satan's onslaught, it is not what you ideally want to be using to absorb every hit. When our faith in God's omnipotence and care is strong, it is impossible for Satan to break through our shield and land an attack. When we allow doubt to creep in, as Peter did when distracted by the waves, we will start to sink. The rest of our armor will be battered, and so will we. But an actively raised shield of faith prevents this otherwise inhibiting fatigue.
4. A shield can incapacitate. When Christ was being tempted by Satan, His faith in the Word and commands of God repelled Satan for a time (Hebrews 4:15). The boss (the metal knob in the middle) on the Roman shields allowed soldiers to give their enemies a stun-inducing shove that would allow them to follow through with an attack. Our faith in God can also give Satan a good shove backwards and give us a chance to fight back by *doing* God's will and work. Faith cannot just be in our minds, it must produce actions—works of obedience and service (James 2:20).

Our faith can guard us during trials in the same way a shield would during battle. When doubt, a favorite weapon of the enemy, creeps in and our beliefs are questioned, our faith in God and His Word will protect us. We can stand firm in knowing what we believe. Isaiah 41:10 says, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous hand." If we have faith in God's promises, we do not need to fear. It is important to realize that doubt, fear and anxiety are attacks from the enemy. Taking up the



Amazing Grace - 2006

William Wilberforce was a British Member of Parliament for 27 years before he won the battle to end the slave trade across the British Empire. It's hard to watch without having a few tears. It was one of Britain's finest hours. His compassion, his deep faith in God, and his passion for making the world a better place for everyone are all things to admire, hopefully to emulate. If you enjoy movies based on true historical events, you will certainly enjoy this one. It is about the heroic efforts of a varied group of people to abolish the slave trade in Britain. The hymn, Amazing Grace always brings tears to my eyes and learning it was written by the former captain of one of the ships used to transport these slaves was quite surprising. This movie will stay with you for a long time.



The Bridge on the River Kwai - 1957

In June of 1942, 61,000 British, Australian, American, New Zealand, Danish and Dutch POWs as well as an estimated 200,000 laborers from India, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma and Thailand were put to work by the Japanese Imperial Army to construct a railway line 415km long to link Kanchanaburi to the Japanese Base camp in Thanbyuzayat in Burma, this ensuring a direct line from Singapore through Malaya and Thailand to link up with the railway network in Burma. Apart from supplying their bases in Burma, the Japanese had also planned to use the railway to launch an attack on India. 16,000 allied prisoners of war lost their lives when this railway was built dying together with 100,000 slave Asian laborers who aren't mentioned all that often...Every kilometer of railway track cost the lives of 38 allies. Alec Guinness, who had served in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve during World War II and piloted a landing craft in the 1943 invasion of Sicily, won the Academy award for best actor, playing the role of the unbending Colonel Nicholson. William Holden and Sessue Hayakawa co-starred. Contrary to film's dramatic conclusion, the bridge was NOT destroyed by the allies during the war. It was hit by allied bombers (see above) but it was reconstructed and is still standing today.

