

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 6:16

Session 80: The Armor of God, pt. 6

I have exhorted us to be reading Ephesians 6:10-18 every day at least once or twice. By now, we should be fairly familiar with the passage on the armor of God.

We have seen how the first three pieces of armor protect us from the phase 1 attack of the policy of evil. When those attacks fail, Satan begins phase 2 which is: Attack the Messenger. This phase is designed to intimidate those who would publish the Dispensational Change, the Mystery of Christ, and the Manifold Wisdom of God into silence.

In his “Attack the Messenger” phase, Satan has certain “wiles” that are designed to rob us of our courage. In all, there are eight categories of the Sufferings of Christ and they are all detailed in the book of 2 Corinthians which we are presently studying on Tuesday nights at Glen Rose. We invite you to be a part of that study, especially since we have only taught the first four sessions, so it is still very early in the study.

Coming back to Ephesians, God gives us a single piece of armor to protect us from these phase 2 attacks; the shield of faith.

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

What are the “fiery darts” of the wicked? The fact that these are likened unto “fiery darts” tells us they are some kind of attack against us, and indeed they are. In the physical realm, when an enemy army laid siege to a city, they would fire flaming arrows at the men on the walls, and also into the city in hopes of setting it on fire; burning up essentials like food, shelters, and munitions. These fiery darts were a form of psychological warfare as they would create fear and panic. The sight of flames and smoke often caused chaos and confusion among enemy forces. These fiery darts also took people away from fighting as they worked to put out the fires, so it negatively impacted a city’s ability to defend itself.

There is a lot of parallel when it comes to the spiritual “fiery darts” which are directed against us. The fiery darts come against us in three different ways.

Fiery dart #1: These are attacks against us personally.

Fiery dart #2: These are attacks against our ministry.

Fiery dart #3: These are attacks against our church.

Don’t confuse the fiery darts as attacks against sound doctrine, that was the phase 1 attack against the message. These phase 2 attacks are designed to produce some specific results.

Personal Attacks: Produce fear and discouragement to silence our proclamation of the message of the Mystery of Christ.

Ministry Attacks: Make us stop ministering the truth to others. When a preacher spends his time defending his ministry instead of edifying the saints, he is playing into Satan’s hands.

Church Attacks: Make us ashamed so we will disassociate ourselves from the body by denying or downplaying our involvement, or by separating ourselves from attending.

By attacking us personally, Satan is trying to make us think twice about the stand we are taking. The goal of attacking us personally is to produce a spirit of fear within us, which will either cause us to keep silent about the doctrines which concern this dispensation of grace, and to keep us from defending those doctrines when we hear someone attacking them.

Ephesians 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, **that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day**, and having done all, to stand.

When the attack changes from being against the message to being against the messenger, that is the “evil day.” We are exhorted to “withstand” this attack, which means that God is not going to make it stop, but He will provide us with the shield of faith so that the fiery darts do not have their intended effect upon us.

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

For most of the time that I have been aware of this verse, I have understood “the wicked” of verse 16 to be a reference to the devil, but now I am not so sure. And it’s not that he isn’t in the context of the passage, but when he is, (stand against the wiles of the devil”), he is referenced as “the devil.”

When we see the phrase, “the wicked,” it appears to me to be plural, not singular. When the Bible uses the word “wicked” to point out Satan in particular, it adds the word “one.”

So, let’s look at this. Firstly, the word “wicked” only shows up 24 times in Matthew through Revelation. Thirteen of those times “wicked” is used as an adjective: wicked servant, wicked generation, etc., with none of these referring to the devil.

However, six times, the word “wicked” is used as an adjective where it is talking about the devil, but when it does, it makes it specific and singular by having the word “wicked” modify the word “one.”

Let me show you the verses.

Matthew 13:19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh **the wicked one**, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

Matthew 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of **the wicked one**;

1 John 2:13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome **the wicked one**. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

1 John 2:14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye

are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome **the wicked one**.

1 John 3:12 Not as Cain, *who* was of **that wicked one**, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

1 John 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and **that wicked one** toucheth him not.

Obviously, when you are talking about the devil, we are talking in the singular, hence, the word “one” is in the phrase. When the Bible says, “the wicked one,” we can be sure it is a reference to Satan.

That leaves five times in which the word “wicked” is used as a noun.

We have a single entry in 2 Thessalonians where “wicked” is used as a noun, referring to the antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then shall **that Wicked** be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

That leaves four uses of “wicked” as a noun, and here are 3 of the verses.

Matthew 13:49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever **the wicked** from among the just,

“The wicked” in this verse is a plural noun, it is talking about more than one person; a group of people.

2 Peter 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of **the wicked**:⁸ (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with **their unlawful deeds**;))

Who is the “wicked” in this verse? It is the Sodomites, and we know it is plural because verse 8 says “their unlawful deeds.”

2 Peter 3:15 And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; ¹⁶ As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which **they that are unlearned and unstable wrest**, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. ¹⁷ Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with **the error of the wicked**, fall from your own steadfastness.

Again, “the wicked,” when used as a noun has a group of people in mind. It is the same in the Old Testament.

Genesis 18:23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with **the wicked**?

Exodus 23:7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify **the wicked**.

Here is the point: when we have the noun phrase, “the wicked,” it is always referring to a group of people. Now, go back and read Ephesians 6:16.

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

If I am thinking about this right, then the fiery darts are actually coming from a group of people. I am not saying that Satan isn’t using them or that he isn’t behind the phase 2 attacks against us; of course he is. But, I think what Paul is doing here is showing us “how” he will fire these darts at us, by using “the wicked” to attack us personally.

So, who are “the wicked” in Ephesians 6? The wicked are those who oppose the doctrines of the dispensational change, the mystery of Christ, the manifold wisdom of God, and rightly dividing the word; and they are attacking us because of their opposition to those doctrines.

When people attack us because of our adherence to Paul’s doctrine, they are carrying out Satan’s phase 2 attack, and we should recognize it for what it is. They

do not realize it, but they are “opposing themselves” as they attack us. According to Ephesians 6:12, even though the wicked are attacking us, our fight is not with flesh and blood, as we are called to “withstand in the evil day.”

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

So, how do we wield the shield of faith in the spiritual realm? We use this spiritual shield by putting our faith in the doctrines which produce comfort, courage, contentment, endurance, etc. in our inner man. In Paul’s epistles we find doctrines which do all sorts of things; some inform us as to our position in Christ, other doctrines guide our conduct and behavior, but the doctrines which Paul has in mind when he speaks of the shield of faith are the doctrines which are designed to bring comfort and consolation in times of suffering.

As we respond properly to these doctrines, they work to strengthen and renew our inner man, no matter what is happening to our outward man. The shield of faith protects us when we are personally attacked so that we do not faint. When our suffering is by some physical malady or infirmity, we will not be overwhelmed by the events of life if we respond in faith to the doctrines of comfort, for those doctrines renew our inward man.

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause **we faint not**; but though our outward man perish, yet **the inward *man* is renewed day by day**.

When we respond in faith to the doctrine, when our ministry is attacked, we will not faint (quit).

2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore seeing **we have this ministry**, as we have received mercy, **we faint not**;

When we talk about the attack being against our church, that would be in light of the church standing for and proclaiming the doctrines of the Dispensational Change, the Mystery of Christ, and the Manifold Wisdom of God. Satan hates churches that teach these doctrines and so the attack is to make a saint ashamed or fearful because he/she is associated with this kind of church. But again, there are doctrines which are designed to get us thinking about our tribulations in a

different way, doctrines that give us a different kind of spirit in the face of these attacks. The sufferings of Christ (SoC) are designed to give us a spirit of fear, discouragement, and resignation; but 2 Timothy says....

2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

The majority of these doctrines which produce comfort and patient endurance in the midst of suffering are taught in 2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.

This third “fiery dart” is attacking the church in our minds by making us ashamed of anything in connection with it. This could be certain members of the church that we are tempted to be ashamed of. It could be the doctrinal stance of the church which these fiery darts work to make us ashamed of, and speak of our involvement in the church much like Peter did as Jesus was being tried. This fiery dart also works to make us ashamed of the very Gospel by which we were saved, knowing that if we are ashamed of the Gospel, we will not be a faithful ambassador with it. This is the fiery dart that is fired at us to also make us ashamed of the sufferings of Christ which we endure. And it is also the fiery dart which was used in Paul’s day to make the saints ashamed of him because he was a prisoner.

Romans 1:16 For **I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:** for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

2 Timothy 1:12 **For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed:** for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

2 Timothy 1:16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and **was not ashamed of my chain:**

Let's make sure we understand what the shield of faith is about; it is doctrine which enables us to continue when we are personally attacked by the policy of evil. These personal attacks are manifold, so let's list a few of them.

The fiery darts are personal attacks against a person's character, motivation and integrity; but they are not because we have demonstrated poor character or we have shown ourselves not to have integrity. These personal attacks are because of the message that is being set forth.

We need to be aware of how Satan fires these darts at us. When Satan wants to attack us personally, he will use people to do it. When the attack is made, it won't be Satan we are looking at, it will be some person.

The attacks against Paul, which he addresses in 2 Corinthians came from two sources: 1) those who were outside of the church of Corinth, and 2) those who were part of the church at Corinth. It will be the same for us, certain attacks will come from outside of our church, while other attacks will come from those who will insert themselves into our church, and since we have many more members remotely, they will populate that group too.

I want to give us an idea of the kind of attacks that came against the apostle Paul. These are the category 1 attacks of the SoC, coming from those outside the church at Corinth. Let me sum up these attacks in the vernacular of our day.

The first category of the sufferings of Christ was an attack on Paul's integrity. Paul was charged with being twofaced and dishonest, that he was misleading people.

They spread the lie that Paul was insincere and could not be trusted. They insisted that Paul was little more than a tyrant.

They criticized Paul's leadership style saying Paul was domineering, bossy, and overbearing. They accused Paul of being heavy-handed and over-assertive. Basically, they painted Paul as a bully, a dictator who intimidated people and terrorized them into accepting his doctrine.

All of this is just the attack in category 1 of the SoC, and there are eight categories listed in 2 Corinthians. As you can imagine, these things were hurtful to Paul, but

they also had an effect on the people who were under his ministry. As a result, many in the church at Corinth were convinced that these things about Paul were true. It made some of them turn from Paul and his doctrine. It caused them to doubt his apostleship.

You know how this works: all you need is for someone to make the criticism, and those who do not know you tend to believe what they heard. I know people have been warned off of our ministry by saying that I want to have dominion over the faith of those who are part of this church. But those who know me know how I feel about that “tutor and governor” issue. But let’s get back to Paul.

In the face of all this, the shield of faith allowed Paul to continue his ministry in the face of these fiery darts. And it wasn’t easy. These were some of the hardest days of Paul’s ministry and he wasn’t sure the church would survive the attacks that were being leveled against him. Thank God that Paul did not throw in the towel and quit.

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