

## Equipped for life – Part 5

**Ephesians 6: 10 – 16** says, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ***In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.***”

### Some instruction:

1. Put on the full armour – utilize all of it – not just some of it. Realise we have all we’ll need for success if we obey God’s instructions.
2. Know when to use what piece – they each service a different purpose – knowing when to use a sword is important and when not to use it
3. Recognise that of the 7 pieces of the armour 6 of them are protective gear – only the sword is an offensive weapon – the rest is defensive – and as Paul says it will help us ***to take our stand against the evil one – to stand firm and to not give over ground.***

Because we wrestle against spiritual forces of evil we need to put on God’s full armour so we will be able to stand strong in the evil day. God knows we will struggle against these evil spirits in everyday life and He wants us to stand firm, to stand our ground and not be intimidated or deceived.

**2 Corinthians 10:3 – 5** says, “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

1. We do not wage war as the world does
2. Our weapons are not of the world – they are literally “not after the flesh” – this goes along with the verses in Ephesians 6 when Paul says our struggle is not against “flesh and blood.” Our weapons are spiritually motivated
3. Though not of the flesh – they are divinely empowered – their power comes from a divine source – a Heavenly source
4. They are designed to demolish strongholds – arguments – and every pretention – which comes from the word pretentious – posing or pretence. Pretention is a claim or argument someone makes to overstate a situation of the importance of a person.
5. We take captive every thought – here is the crux of our stance or war – it is against thoughts, argument and pretensions – this is where our enemy has a field day with us. He influences our thoughts, our opinions, our views, our feelings and our judgements.
6. The greatest threat we face from our enemy is his ability to deceive us or to feed us lies. Speaking to the religious rulers of his day Jesus makes a bold claim in **Luke 8:44**, “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

The power of deception is great! Have you ever received an article from someone or read it on Facebook and either just believed it or thought there’s something just not right about this.

The new word is “Fake News” or for some “alternative truth.” We know how this has troubled our world and caused great divide between many – not to mention that true truth is under assault.

Satan’s great weapon against us is his ability to deceive us. His name is Deceiver because this is what he does so well. The enemy works with our own heart. His work centres on arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

**Jeremiah 17:9** says, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

The enemy works with our weaknesses and manipulates our frailties to lead us into deception. The battle is in our mind and emotions. The struggle is not flesh and blood but thoughts, desires, motivations and our feelings.

**1 John 2:16** describes them in this way, “For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world.”

The world system – a system infiltrated by the powers of darkness. The philosophies of the world system – the world’s views, ideas and values. And these ideas inspired by darkness and motivated by sin and the enemy of our soul uses them as weapons against us.

This is why Paul encourages us to be renewed in mind. **Romans 12: 2** “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

The **Message Bible** says it this way, “Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.”

Listen to **JB Philips Translation**, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.”

One of the parts of the armour of God is a shield of faith “with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”

**What are the flaming arrows?** You’ve seen them in the movies – an arrow tipped with flammable material set on fire and shot from a bow. These flaming arrows hit a target and set fire to it. They are very dangerous and effective weapons of war.

In a similar way the enemy uses certain kinds of flammable thoughts or imaginations as weapons. He throws them at us – it is as if these thoughts are like dart tipped with fire with this determination – to inflame our imaginations.

These thoughts are inflammatory and causes strong reactions within us – not just anger but they enkindle the worst passions, like doubt, fear, insecurity, flaming sexual desires, suspicion, cynicism, disappointment and disillusionment. These thought inflame natural feeling like unforgiveness or offence and turn them into forest fires out of control.

These are the furious and fiery suggestions of the enemy incite evil and excitement to sin! This is how the enemy works against you. This is where we are called upon by Paul to take up the shield of faith that can extinguish those fiery arrows. The shield is the first barrier to an attack from the enemy. It is oblong shaped and gives cover to the whole body. When a group of soldiers stand together they each hold up the shield and this manoeuvre is called "the tortoise." It is in fact a beautiful picture of the church in action too. Where we as the church offer protection for each other in a battle or a struggle.

### **It is a shield of faith?**

1. **Psalms 7:10** says, "My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart." The shield is all about our faith in God Himself – His nature, His character and our faith in Him. Faith in His word. Faith is what He has done and will do on our behalf.

**Romans 8:31** says, "What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" If God is for us – on our side – working with us and us working with Him – then who or what can stand against us? The answer is nothing can stand against us – no one or no thing can stand against us.

We take up the shield of faith and with it we will quench every fiery dart of the enemy! Not some but all – such is the effectiveness of this shield! Our shield is God Himself – our faith in His goodness, His grace, His kindness and His love for us.

It is the faith of patience and endurance, the almost passive faith, trusting in God's protection and submissive to His will, on which the darts of temptation, whether from fear, or from lust, or from doubt, fall harmless. It is with this faith we stand our ground against the enemy. His fiery darts fall harmlessly to the side.

**Romans 8:35 – 39**, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The shield guards our mind – this is the place the devil fires His flaming arrows – so our minds need to be protected by faith in who God is and what He has done for us.

### **We stand in our faith in what He has done for us.**

Forgiven – shame has been removed

No condemnation

Justified – legally just as if I had never sinned

Healed – by His stripes I have been healed

Free – the chains have fallen away

Every curse has been broken

He is with us and will never leave us

He is more than enough

I am a new person

The enemy has been defeated

On my behalf Jesus died and rose again

Jesus defeated Death, Hell and Sin and rose again victorious over every work of darkness

**1 John 5: 4 – 5**, “... for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, ***even our faith***. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”