

Message Transcript

SHIELD OF FAITH | EQUIP FOR BATTLE

RYAN BRAMLETT | JUNE 22, 2025

Stay standing with us for this moment as we continue to worship to our living hope, all that we have in Jesus. I want to read this 1 Peter it says:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to the inheritance that is," and here this, "imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you." (NASB)

Can we celebrate the inheritance of the living hope that we have in Jesus? So good. Go ahead and grab a seat. Open up a Bible. Get to Ephesians, chapter 6. We're going to be starting in verse 13 again today.

You all doing alright? Good, good. Me too. Thanks for asking. No, that's good. We've been in this series and every week we've been talking about our refreshed Mission Statement. And you are like, "Again?" Yeah, we're going to talk about it every single week because we want it to be so clear that unless you understand our mission, this church will not make any sense to you. So, we want to be very upfront about what we are trying to do and what we are all about. And if you remember, it's a three-part Mission Statement. Here it is:

Clear the Way
Equip for Battle
Deploy for Impact

We want to clear the way, it's right there, I can feel it. We want to equip for battle, and we want to deploy for impact. That's who we are as a church. We know we are following after John the Baptist and saying, "Hey, it's not about us, but our goal is to flatten the hills, straighten the roads, bring people face to face with Jesus, share the gospel with them, and let Him do what He does best—save souls.

And we want to be equipped for battle and then we want to be deployed for impact. Right? We know that all of us have been made in the image of God, have been made to make a difference. We want to know what that looks like, not just here at a service. But, as we go through our lives, we are being deployed.



And that middle one is what this series is all about. We want to be equipped for the battle that is around us. That's a big part of Ephesians, chapter 6, which is all about spiritual warfare. And what we've said is, "Hey, step one is just acknowledging the war around us. You and I were born on a battlefield in the midst of a war that has been waging since the beginning of time."

And it started in a spiritual realm, but it shows up in the physical world that is forever connected and that changes how we live. It's different when there is an enemy. Right?

If I was playing football or doing drills, I can, without fear, run out cut to the middle, catch a ball. Now, if you tell me this same thing we're going to do but there is going to be a giant man in the middle waiting to take my head off, that changes things for me.

And what we've said is, "Hey, in the world life will make a lot more sense if we acknowledge the real enemy, the devil."

Now, as you've read the Bible and as you begin to work through it, you'll see, pretty quickly, that what happened in the garden between God's first creation of humans, Adam and Eve, and this enemy it continues to grow. And then more and more enemies stack up.

I'm reading through the Old Testament right now. It is one battle after another. And it's not one versus one. It is God versus everybody. Right? Royal, rumble style, He's throwing people out of the ring. He is hitting the devil with a stone-cold stunner, rock bottom. There are a lot of things here that you might have to google later, but it's theologically sound. Okay? It's God versus everybody. That's the picture that you get of who God is in the Old Testament. He is a warrior, a mighty warrior.

Look at this in Exodus, chapter 15, verse 3. It says:
"The Lord is a warrior; Yahweh is his name!" (NLT)

And He is victorious, undefeated, He has not met an enemy that He can't beat. That is the story of our God.

We see though, in the New Testament, God continues to share more and more with us. And in a lot of our theology, our belief about God, we believe this, God has decided to share His Spirit with us. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave lives in every single one of us, empowering us. But there is even more. I feel like an infomercial right now: wait, there's more.



God says, "Hey, for this battle I am going to give you My Spirit, and I'm going to give you the very armor of God because I know the enemy, I know how he's going to attack you, so I want you to be prepared for every blow.

And that's what this series has been all about. How do we get battle ready? Each week just looking at the armor of God, taking it piece by piece and saying, "Have I put that on? Am I keeping it on? And what does it mean to put on the armor of God?" Right?

So, today we're just going to continue with that process. And we're going to read it in its entirety, Ephesians, chapter 6, verses 13 through 17.

And here's what I'll tell you. What I've been trying to do is memorize this and when I get ready in the morning, when I'm getting ready for the day, I not only put on my physical clothes, I'm praying putting on the spiritual armor of God. As I'm getting ready I just want this to be so engrained in me to have this armor on, "God, meet me in this moment. Help me to put on the belt of truth. Help me live your truth out there. Help me to believe what is true and expose the lies. "God, help me to put on the armor of righteousness. Don't let today be about my righteousness or make that decide what I can or can't do. God, I want Your righteousness. I want to believe who You say I am.

"God, give me shoes of peace. God let me go, not just searching for peace but I'm going to bring peace no matter where I go. No matter the chaos, God, I believe You can give me shoes of peace."

And today we're going to continue in that list and the next item is the shield of faith. Okay? So, look at this, Ephesians, chapter 6. It says:

"Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness.

"For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (NLT)

And like I said, today is all about that shield. The shield of faith. So, let's remove all of the other verses around and just home in on verse 16. Let's see what is unique about this one. It's different from all of the others we've read before. It says:

"In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil."



Now this is just a Bible study tool that you can use when you are reading, you're looking for things that stand out. Sometimes there is a phrase or a word that is repeated over and over and over again. Sometimes there is one word that is a little bit different than the rest. When I see that it just gives me a moment to say, "Okay, I need to double click on that. Why is that different?"

It was put on. Put on. Put on the belt of truth, put on the body armor of righteousness, put on the shoes of peace. And then hold up the shield of faith. Is there something to that? What's the difference?

Well, if we look at where we got this, we said it comes from Paul, this guy who is imprisoned at the time, likely chained to a Roman soldier. He is very familiar with what these fellas wear. He can see the belt. He can see the armor. He knows the helmet.

And what he does is he is saying, "Hey, there is a spiritual war that is happening, one you can't see. So, I'm going to use physical armor that you can see to help you understand a battle that you can't."

See, with the Roman soldiers a lot of that was put on and kept on. They always had it on. You had the shoes. You had the armor. You had the helmet. All of that was staying. But the shield was different. It was as needed—it was used on an as needed basis.

It wasn't a little shield. This wasn't just like something you could hold in front of your chest. It was a full body, two-and-a-half feet wide, almost five feet tall shield. And it was only picked up during a certain time. Do you know when? If you don't know when I made it into a slide:

The Shield was needed when taking ground

You see, arrows back then were nasty. They didn't just have a sharp point on them, which signified that this was an arrow, which I think is bad enough, it would also be attached to this combustible material. The moment it hit your person or the moment it hit your shield it would explode and immediately set everything on fire.

Here's the thing. There was a striking distance to these arrows. So, they would hold them until you got close enough. Then when you in striking distance, when you became a threat, you were at the wall, you were coming through the entrance, you were scaling—that was the time to let these fiery arrows fall.



And legend has it that because of this the Romans started taking their shields and getting leather, drenching it in water, wrapping their shields in it so when the fiery arrows would hit it, it would be extinguished.

Paul says, "Hey, just like that. Just like the Roman soldiers you know who are being attacked by fiery arrows, there is an enemy in the spiritual world, and he sends fiery arrows to stop us in our tracks. And if you are taking notes, here's the first thing I want you to grab from our Scripture today.

You can expect fiery arrows from the devil when you start to take ground for the Kingdom of God

Ephesians, chapter 6 is very clear where it starts out that we wrestle, that our fight, our war, is not against flesh and blood. It is against the spiritual. So, where is enemy territory? Well, it's not going to be that clear. It's not like passing a state sign saying: Now entering Ohio. Now entering the devil's island. It's not going to be that clear.

It's actually much worse than that. There are no specific areas that are his. The Bible actually says in 2 Corinthians that he is the god of this world. He is the prince of air. It belongs to him. So, when we carry the name of Jesus, we belong to a kingdom that is not of this world. We join a campaign to take back the world from Satan, from the devil.

And as you can imagine, it's not an easy process. There are no white flags. There are no moments of surrender. Everything is taken by force. Look at the way it says it in Matthew, chapter 11. It says:

"And from the time John the Baptist," who was Jesus' cousin, "began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing and violent people are attacking it." (NLT)

What does that look like? Violent people? It looks like fiery arrows. It looks like ground is going to have to be taken, not given. But I do want to be clear: forcefully but not physically. It's not physical force it's a spiritual force and that looks different.

This is what really threw off the first followers of Jesus. They were ready for the tanks. They were ready for the infantry. They were ready to seize Rome by power. And then Jesus strolls in on a donkey and they were like, "Oh, wish you wouldn't have done that. Where is Your horse? Where is our artillery? Where are our swords? We need power."



And Jesus uses spiritual power, which to the world looked a whole lot like weakness--that He would offer Himself as a sacrifice, that he would love those who hated Him. Even as they were killing Him He said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

But what was the result? Well, just a short time later this small group of Christians would overtake the strongest empire in the world, not by force but by love and by spreading the gospel and showing the world something that they had never seen—an upside-down Kingdom.

So, it will be taken by force but it's going to look different than I think you and I, a lot of times, think it will. We are not going to surrender. And that's why we've been taking our time working through the refreshed Mission Statement and our Vision as a church. Because we want all of us to feel the weight of it.

We don't want to be surprised when the fiery arrows come at us, because we are here to do, to be a part of the mission. To go and to make disciples. To take ground for the Kingdom. That's our vision. Look at the Vision Statement as a church:

Taking ground for the Kingdom across Indy and beyond.

We are coming for the devil's territory. We are coming to take ground in the name of Jesus. And we aren't taking ground from the municipalities of Indianapolis, Carmel, Plainfield, or Fishers. We are forcefully taking ground from the principalities of evil in the spiritual realm. That is what we are here to do as a church. That is the mission.

And what we said is, as we are going we want to be battle ready, staying prepared, staying alert knowing that fiery arrows are coming and we are not going to shrink back. We are not going to retreat. We are going to move forward with a mission that Jesus has given us.

If our vision is to take ground for the Kingdom, we'll see arrows fall from the sky. The devil will be coming against us. Look at what it says in 1 Peter, chapter 4. It says:

"So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves," do you see that battle language? Arm yourselves, "with the same attitude he had," Jesus, "and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin." (NLT)



The same attitude that Jesus had. You know this. He was attacked by everyone on every single side. He even went toe to toe with the devil himself in the desert—fiery arrows left and right. But he didn't shrink back. He continued to push forward. He didn't let anything stop Him from taking the ground that God had called Him to claim. Do we have that same mindset that is in Christ Jesus? Do we even acknowledge that if we're going to be taking ground we're going to be taking arrows?

Some of you have felt this. And it was surprising to you that you felt them because you were living your life apart from God, you were living your life ignoring God. And you were at this moment when you came to Jesus, you gave your life to Him, you believed in Him more than anything you've ever believed. And you went from just being a bystander to getting in there. You were in the war. You were taking ground. And you were like, "Why is this so much harder?" We think that when we start to follow Jesus it's going to be easier. No, but it becomes possible. We move from a battle that we can't win to a battle we can't lose, but we're still in the battle, fiery arrows are still coming.

Maybe you experienced that when you came out of those waters of the baptism, hands in the sky like victory was yours. But I love the way that Pastor Aaron talks about it. It's like, "When you come out of the baptism, you've got a target on your back."

And on Sunday you stood with so much belief, so much faith and victory, and then by Wednesday you are like, "What has happened? I feel like my life is harder than it once was." When you start serving and you start putting yourself out there and you come face to face with who you are and what you don't have to offer, you have to lean more on the Spirit of God, like, "This is so much harder than I thought it was going to be."

When you start giving financially for the first time, you hear who Jesus is. He gave everything. God emptied heaven for you. You're like, "I just want to give everything to Him. I'm going to start giving." And it's so much harder and you feel fiery arrows coming.

I remember the first time I gave. I was an early, early Christian. And this is back when we used to pass the trays, you know? And you would put your money, your check on it and you would also look to see who else was putting their money in. I never had anything to put in there. I didn't have a lot.



But this Sunday I was prepared. I stopped at the ATM. I had a fresh, crisp twenty-dollar bill. And I was ready to make it rain for the Kingdom of God. And that tray came. I was sitting on the left side of the auditorium. I'm not point at you saying you're going to give for the first time today. I'm just saying I was over there.

That tray comes. I take it out, and I fold it, and I set it on the tray. And it felt so good. It felt like I was trusting God with a little and He was proud of me. It was such a beautiful moment.

It was so good that after church I had to celebrate. And I went to the only place I knew to go to celebrate and that was Taco Bell right over here across the interstate. And I rolled down the window. I gave twenty to God and I'm about to spend six—I ate like a king. Okay?

But as I get my food from the drive through, I go to roll up the window. It goes up about two inches and then clicks and falls down. Great. I was like, "God, did you miss the whole twenty-dollar thing back there? Why would You allow my window to break the moment that I had this moment of breakthrough?" And I got this moment of pain.

And I think a lot of times that's how it works. God begins to unravel something, God begins to awaken something within us, and it almost feels backwards. Like, why is it harder now? I want you to hear this. The devil doesn't waste arrows on anyone who isn't a threat.

So, the moment you go to take ground, the moment when you give more of yourself, the moment you start giving you can expect arrows. But if we just come in and we're just playing church, "Hold. Don't shoot." If we come in and we're just pretend Christians going through the motions, "Hold." If we just come in and we're hypocrites, we say we believe this, but our lives look nothing like what we believe, "Hold."

If we are Christian hobbyists, which has to be the worst hobby—if you treat Christianity like a hobby, like, "Yeah, I just check it out some days and it's one of the things I do for fun." It's a horrible life. But at the same time the devil is not wasting arrows on that: hold, hold, hold.

But listen to this, if we come in armored up, living by the power of the Spirit, sharing the gospel, leading with the love of Jesus Christ, taking ground for the Kingdom of God: fire, fire, fire. When we become a threat, the moment we move against him fire will fall.



And here's the question that is coming to me as I'm reading through this, as I'm trying to make sense of it: what do the devil's fiery arrows look like? I just have a gut feeling that it's not just going to show up in the mail. It's not going to come in an Amazon box, like, "Hey, thinking of you just because. I just want you to have this gift from me to you."

No, what can we know about a fiery arrow? Well, the word fiery is often linked to some very specific things. If you are taking notes I want you to write this down. In Scripture, the word fiery is often linked to trials and suffering. Peter makes the connection in 1 Peter, chapter 4. I want to read this so that we are all on the same page. What are these arrows going to look like when they show up in our lives? It says:

"Dear friends," once again, "don't be surprised" you think we need to hear this, "at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world." (NLT)

Paul is talking to Christians who are taking ground for the Kingdom against the devil, and they are probably sending him some letters of like, "Hey, this is going horribly wrong. We're doing all of the things you told us to do, but we're getting arrested, we're getting beaten, we're getting our reputation tainted. What is happening? Are we doing this thing right?"

And he's like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. Don't be surprised. The moment you step out. The moment you take ground you can expect some fiery trials." So, we know that it's going to come in the form of trials and it's going to come in the form of suffering.

What are they aimed at? What are these arrows really trying to get to? And it's not that the devil is necessarily trying to kill us. He's not trying to end our lives. He's trying to do something very specific. He's trying to get to the thing that is actually bigger than even living or dying. It's the thing that connects us to eternity. It's the thing that connects us to God. You see:

The devil's fiery arrows are aimed at one thing: your faith. It may seem like there are a thousand different things going on in your life, but when it comes to the attacks from the enemy, from the evil one, you can rest assured he's going after one thing. He'll show up a bunch of different ways, but he's coming for your faith and he's coming for my faith.



I need a shield of faith. That's what we've been saying. The armor of God is specifically designed to defend us against the strategies of the devil. So, if God is saying, "I need you to have a shield of faith," it means that my faith is going to be attacked.

So, what is faith? Because it's one of those terms that is so big that a lot of us have different definitions of what it could mean. And it's one of those like, it's the gospel, it's all of these big church words. But what is it really?

I just want us to look at Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 1 because I think it's the clearest snapshot of what faith is when we talk about it and what the enemy is trying to attack. So, Hebrews, chapter 11. It says:
"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (NASB 1995)

So, if faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the devil will attack assurance and hope. Whatever assurance you have in God and what He's going to do, whatever hope you have in God and what He is going to do, you can imagine that he's going to attack that.

Think about how anxiety is running rampant in our culture right now. I know I've experienced anxiety for the first time. So many people wrestle with it. And if I look at those and I place them next to each other, what happens when assurances are removed? Anxiety takes their place.

It's pretty much the same thing. I'm looking at a future that I don't know and that I'm uncertain of. And when I don't know and I think about the worst case scenario or that it's not going to end well, anxiety creeps up in me and I hear all of these whispers of how bad it's going to be and how I can't stand a chance, "This thing is going to blow up in your face. You're not enough."

What God is trying to produce is a faith that holds onto assurance and confidence. A faith that looks beyond the physical. A faith that sees past the fiery arrows, the trials, the problems, the persecution, the sickness, all of it and says, "I know that you are seeing this, but I want you to see past it, I want you to see through it. I want you to have the assurance that if Jesus is who He says that He is, there is not a fire from hell that can come to you.

There is nothing that can stop you in your tracks because if Jesus defeated sin and death, because the tomb is empty, you can prevail. You have all the assurance that you need. Don't stop.

Do you have that kind of assurance? Or has your faith really been regulated to nothing more than just the physical, that what you can pick up with your senses is what you believe?



Faith was never meant to be that. Faith is for the gaps. Faith is to provide hope and assurance when it doesn't look like there should be any hope and it doesn't look like you should have any assurances. It's believing that there's always a greater reality.

I love what A. W. Tozer says. He says: "Any faith that must be supported by the evidence of the senses is not real faith."

And it's hard to predict what the devil is going to use, what the fiery arrows are going to look like when they show up in your life. We know it's going to come for your faith. We know it's going to try to take away your convictions. We know it's going to try to take away your assurances and your hope.

"But Pastor, what is it going to look like? How can I know this is a fiery arrow from the devil?" Well, he is so crafty that he could send a fiery arrow for you that looks completely different than what it looks like for me.

For example, he might send a fiery arrow that causes you to lose your job. And you didn't even know it, but you really had so much security, so much assurance built up in that job and how you were able to provide because of that job. When you lost it, you lost your faith in God because. "Why would a good God take something so good from me?" So, maybe for you it was the loss of a job.

For another person the devil might send a promotion because you were going through life, you were humble, you were a servant, the workplace was how you were advancing the Kingdom, but then you got this job and you got this promotion and you began to believe the lie of who you needed to be. And now you've lost your humility.

And now, because of this title, you have this pride that is coming up within you. And you used to be dependent upon God, praying every morning and every night. Now you're like, "I think I've got it. I think I'm pretty good. I think I'm pretty smart." And over time, just little by little, that flame is just growing and growing, removing your faith.

I'm going to give you a list, but it's not an exhaustive list. But it's just a moment in time to look around to say, "If I'm taking ground for the Kingdom, if I am a Christian, I can expect to see fiery arrows in my life." So here are just a few to get you alert and open to the fact that you have an enemy who is trying to take you out.



Here's what it could look like:

Fiery Arrows

Fear

Noise

Rejection

Grief

Temptation

Doubt

It could look like fear. This is probably one of the biggest ones that we will see. You see this over and over again in Scripture. What is God's command? Fear not. We see this when Jesus gets frustrated with people. It's not because of how good or bad they are, it's because they lack faith because they are afraid. They are afraid of the storms.

And I don't know what you know about fire, but as you can imagine fire brings fear maybe more than anything else. I don't know if you've ever been burned before. If you've ever touched something hot, what is your immediate response? When you touch something it is to pull back. It is to shrink back.

I remember once when I was working at the King, and for those who are new, it's the Burger King. I worked there for a long time in high school. And I was on the fry station. I'm not bragging but I knew how to scoop some fries. And I'm in there and I'm scooping. I'm getting them all: large, small, king-size, I got them all. Now, we had a very efficient process for bringing in new fries. Right? You raise the fries back out of the grease, you let the grease fall, you say, "Fries. Everyone moves their hands. You dump fresh fries in, you salt them, you go back to serving the King.

That did not happen on this day. I'm serving. I'm getting the fries one after another. And the fella in the back skips steps one and two. And he just dumped a hot basket of fries on my arm all the way up through my hands. Blisters almost immediately began to grow because of the fire, how hot it was.

Now, I wanted to punch him in the face. But I couldn't close my hand because of the blisters. But you can imagine how fearful I was from that heat. Every time I went to scoop, I was taking a second to look back to see what he was doing. I began to shrink a little bit and be afraid.

And a lot of times when we begin to experience a little bit of fire, a little bit of a struggle, a little bit of this and that, our tendency is to just pull back and to stop taking ground.



Is there anything in your life that you are fearful of? That is probably something that you need to move in that direction.

Noise. Noise—a lot of times what the devil will use is noise. He will get us moving fast. He'll get everything to be super loud to the point where we stop hearing the voice of God. And if we stop hearing the voice of God long enough we believe the lie that God is done talking. And if God's not talking, then maybe He's not real. And that begins to attack our faith.

So, if I notice that things are just getting really loud at work, at school, as I'm going through my life, that could be just a marker for me to say, "Hey, I need to quiet down. There is something over here in the realm of noise, something that is loud in my life and I need the quiet so I can hear from God."

Do you have something like that in your life? Something that is just loud and overwhelming and you can't hear anything else? If you look at your spouse right now, you are the dumbest person I've ever seen. No, but is there something in your life that seems so loud and it's overwhelming you, deafening everything else. That could be a fiery arrow.

Rejection. Rejection is a big one. We go through our lives, and we want to be accepted. We talk so much about the armor of God's righteousness, we want to go, but if we face enough rejection from people we begin to believe the lie that attacks our faith, "People don't even love us. If people don't even love us and accept us, how could God?" And we begin to lose our faith believing that God has rejected us when He never has. It's a fiery arrow.

Grief, loss. When we go through a situation and we lose someone who we love or they get the cancer diagnosis, you begin to grieve this thing. We say, "God, if You are good, then why would you allow this type of pain to come into my life? If you couldn't stop this grief from coming, are you really worthy to be followed anyway?" Do you see, it's never just the thing on the surface, the enemy is attacking much deeper than that. He's going after our faith.

Temptation is a big one. So many people come to salvation after struggling for so long. They've been tempted day after day, year after year. And then they come to Jesus, this One, this Provider who heals, and the One who we sing about. "Okay, I'll give my life to Him."



They come out of the baptistry, and they give their life to Jesus, and they wake up the next day with this same temptation still waiting for them at the door, "If God was real then I wouldn't struggle with this temptation." Do you see how it's attacking your faith?

God never promised to remove the temptation. God said that He would be there always, and He would never leave you, He would never forsake you. But that doesn't mean that He's not real, it's the temptation that is real. That's the way that the devil begins to shift and make the lie come to life.

Maybe the biggest one that he's used from the beginning is doubt. There is a fiery arrow of doubt. Once you begin to push in and once you begin to give more of your life to Jesus, once you become more generous and you're going to love other people, when you begin to go to group and your whole life is tied up in His mission, and you can start to doubt, "Is God even real? Is God good? Can God be trusted?"

It's almost like these thoughts are coming from you, "Why do I even think this? I don't want to wrestle with this. Life is so much easier if I just believe God is good. Why is it so hard for me to believe?" Why does doubt seem so easy?"

What if it was a fiery arrow the devil is sending to do one thing, to get me and you away from faith, away from the protective shield that you and I have been issued by God Himself. He can't knock the shield down. He can't take it from us. The only way he wins is if we put down the shield of faith, we stop taking up the shield of faith.

What about you? Can you identify with some fiery arrows in your life? I know I can. As I was going through that list I'm like, "Oh, yeah. I can see that." I can see it before, so I started praying and started looking.

And now I approach my prayer life differently. Now that's just not happenstance, it's not just the thing that is happening over here. I'm treating it as a fiery arrow that needs to be dealt with, it needs to be extinguished, because if not it could start to dismantle my faith.

And if you can't, if you are like, "I'm going to shoot straight with you, I haven't seen a fiery arrow in decades. Life is going pretty good for me. I have no struggle, no opposition, no pain," I would ask the question, "Am I a threat to the devil?" And if not, make a move. Start taking ground.



If you are feeling the heat from the arrows, you're going to begin to live differently. That closeness that you want, that searching that you're doing that's for a closeness with God.

Some people kind of wrap this idea of depth, "I need more from a sermon, I want more from the church," I can tell you that when you give more is when you start moving for God, when you become obedient to Him, when you start taking ground for the Kingdom, you will find a depth that you've never felt before. You will reach the places you've never reached before. And, once again, God is using all of us together to work together to grow us in our faith.

For the rest of our time here today, I just want all of us to see, if we're going to commit to this, if we are going to hold up the shield of faith, what will that look like? How will I know that I'm holding it up? What help can we provide as a church?

The first thing that I'm going to give you is really a summary of this whole sermon in a sentence. Just look at this and I'll walk through each line. To live a life of faith is to take ground for the Kingdom, to raise the shield, and to trust that no matter the arrow, the shield of faith will quench the fire before it consumes me.

So, I would take a picture of this. I just want to work through it line by line. Because for some of you, you put down the shield. You stopped believing there was a reason to carry it because you stopped taking ground for the Kingdom. You live an okay life. You live a quiet life. But you live an undisturbed life. And what you need in this season is to be awakened. You need to pray, "God, where are you calling me to go? What ground do I need to take? God awaken me to the battle and bring me to the front lines." Are you willing to pray that prayer?

For others of you, you're convicted right now because it's not the shield of faith that you are holding up to defend yourself from the trials and the sufferings. Along the way you started picking up a different shield. And the shield of faith says that it will be the only thing that can and will protect you, but you found something else over here.

And I don't want to make an exhaustive list, but there is something in your life that when you picked it up, you felt security and you felt assurance and you felt confident and you felt hope knowing, "No matter what comes to me, as long as I can hold onto this I'm going to be okay."



I think what God may be challenging you with right now is that you can't hold up two shields. It just looks silly. And if you hold up two shields, you're going to eventually lay down one of them. And I think if you're being honest, you've laid down the shield of faith and God is calling you to pick it back up.

And the phrase that kept coming to me as I was thinking about the shield and being protected is, if we pick up the wrong shield it will not only keep things from us, it will keep God from us in a sense too. We are not trusting Him to protect us. Do you want to be kept from what is keeping you from God? Does that make sense? Do you want to be kept from what is keeping you from God? Because what it is going to take is sacrifice.

What it's going to take is for you to lay that thing down and to say, "This was a good thing that I made an ultimate thing. I was seeking refuge and protection in it. And I don't want to do it anymore because I realize that it was helping me in some ways, but any time I sacrifice closeness with God, any time I disobey what He's telling me, it's always going to come at a loss."

So, in this moment, you may need to lay down that shield and to pick up the shield of faith. "Do I have the right shield? Am I holding up the shield?" Here's the second thing:

Faith believes that even the enemy's fire, in the Father's hands, can forge us into the likeness of Christ

Do you believe that? Because if you want to talk about one of the things that destroys people's faith it's that as they go through life, everything is cool until the fiery arrows come and they begin to lose faith in God.

But the Bible paints a very different picture of what this life is going to look like. He just keeps us... It's not that the arrows don't come, He says He gives us something that the fire can't penetrate, that the fire will fall. It is going to be used, in the hands of God, to forge us into the image of Jesus.

I want you to see this in Scripture, 1 Peter, chapter 1, verses 6 through 7: "So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. (NLT)



Here's what I want you to be able to see. There is a reason that God allows the fiery arrows from the devil. What the enemy sends to kill, steal and destroy, God uses to heal, restore, and to bring life, to forge us into the image of Jesus. The two different pictures we see in Scripture are arrows and a furnace. And just like gold goes in and all the impurities are removed, God says, "I allow those arrows to come. And even though the shield stops them, the heat will sometimes burn off the rough edges.

"And I need you to trust me in the process. When those arrows come to forge, move forward. Even though the heat might feel like it gets a little bit hot, I want you to trust Me that I'm not going to let it burn too much. And I'm actually going to use it to form you into the likeness of Jesus.

"And I'm going to use it in a way that, you've got to trust Me. There is nothing that can provide what I'm going to provide by allowing you to go through this trial. You'll still feel the heat, but don't lose faith when the arrows come."

The thing that I want to plead with you today is to let Him use them. When Doctor Keller talks about discipline, it's in the sense of controlled suffering. And that's what it is.

And what if our heavenly Father operates in the same way? Like discipline for kids, you know it's just like causing some suffering, small suffering now, to save them from a bigger suffering down the road. And we do this with their attitudes, we do this with lying, with stealing. We ground them. We punish them. We provide a little bit of suffering to save them from suffering down the road. Now, if we take that same picture, if the worst suffering that we could ever experience is to be separated from God for eternity, what would be considered lesser suffering than that? What would God be willing to use to get us there? And the answer is pretty much anything.

So, as you go through and the fiery arrows come and they take more than you would have ever thought that they would, and life gets harder than you ever thought it would be, and temptation seems to grow in areas where you've been praying, and praying, and praying for a miracle, God is calling to us that this is where faith comes in. This is when you need assurance.

It doesn't feel like it when none of your senses can combat what you are facing. You need a faith that is greater. That is what Jesus is offering, "I need you to stand in the furnace and trust that I'm doing something, a good work in this." And the third thing is this:
Overlap your shields



I think what you'll begin to notice is when we live a life of faith and we begin to take ground and we see the arrows that are coming from every direction, we begin to hold those shields up differently.

And you begin to see, just like Roman soldiers, it wasn't just them protecting themselves. They could stand up and become a wall, impenetrable. No one could move through it. It wasn't just the strength of one, it was the strength of the person next to them, and the person standing next to them. They created this fortress, and they moved.

What if we begin to see the moves that we make in faith as overlapping shields?

When you come forward for prayer at the end of service, that's what you are doing, you are locking shields with someone. You are overlapping shields. When you go to group, this is not a social gathering where you are talking about who brought the potato salad.

This is a moment where the army is coming together in this small unit and we're talking about how we're taking ground for the Kingdom. We're talking about fiery arrows. And then we are standing together shielding one another from what is coming. We are speaking life and encouragement and faith into one another, continuing to push us forward.

Does your group look like that? Because that's what faith produces within us. It's the assembling of shields. It is a community of believers who are so locked in step that it brings fear even to the devil himself. Do you have that? Do you have that kind of faith?

And I know that at some of our campuses today and probably in every room there is someone who is saying, "I don't have that kind of faith. I don't have that kind of assurance. If I'm being honest, I feel like I'm on fire right now. The fiery arrows are all over me and I don't know how to stop them. I just want it to stop. And you speak of this God who can stop them."

I just want to tell you that you can leave here with that kind of protection. You can leave here with a shield of faith. All it takes is for you to come to terms with this, that Jesus is the living hope. Jesus is God Himself. Jesus is the King of this universe. He's the One who has been given the keys of heaven and earth. You and I, what we're called to do is place our faith in Him. To say, "I believe that Jesus is the One who conquered death and sin. He's the One who paid the penalty for my sin. And now, I confess my belief, I confess my faith in Him. I trust Him with my life. Not just in this one, but in the one to come."



That is what it means to place your faith in Jesus. And if that's you, overlap shields with someone before you leave today and receive that and walk out of here with assurances, not just where you are going in eternity one day, but what this week is going to look like. Walk in a confidence that you've never had before.

And for all of us, we're going to close in worship today by singing a song of faith. And it's all centered on the name; it's in the name of Jesus. He is the source of our faith. He is the One who protects us.

He is the One who we look to, that we have full assurance in because no matter how many arrows, no matter how hot, no matter what the devil takes, we stand in confidence knowing that if Jesus went to the cross, if the tomb is empty, if the fires of hell couldn't stop Jesus, then they can't stop us because the same Spirit that rests on Him rests on us. The same armor that He had fits to us as well.

So, if you will, would you stand to your feet? I want to bring us to this space, this battle cry. That there is the name of Jesus that we are going to call upon. Not just on our death beds, not just in the day when we come out of the baptistry, but every single day we are going to be armored up. We're going to be taking ground for the Kingdom. We're going to be standing against the schemes of the devil. And there is going to be one name that we say over and over and over again. That's the name we're going to pray in. That's the name we're going to worship.

So, at all of our campuses, close your eyes and bow your heads.

Father, I thank You that we know a name. We know a name and His name is Jesus. We know a name that can extinguish every fiery arrow of the devil. We know a name that can keep us standing. We know a name that can keep us standing against the schemes of the devil. We know a name that produces a faith that shakes hell itself. We know a name that brings fear to the demons. We know a name that brings healing to all people. We know a name that brings eternity. We know a name that brings a level of love that the world has never experienced. We know a name.

And, Father, we're going to lift up that name in worship right now. And as we lift up the name of Jesus, we know that we are creating a solid rock to worship from. We know that we are displacing the devil. We pray that in this moment as we lift Your name that arrows fall in different directions and we will stand, and every chain is broken. And we will give You and You alone all of the glory. Jesus it is in Your perfect and holy name we pray. And the church says: Amen. Let's worship!

