

He is My Shield and Hope for Salvation

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome. If you're not so new, you've been doing something like vacationing and taking cruises, welcome back. We've missed you. In case you forgot, we are on a series on spiritual warfare, kind of the tail end, last two sermons as we cover this wonderful armor of God, which the King of Kings and Lord of Lords has provided to us. One of the things that we've learned quite clearly, according to Paul in Ephesians 6, is that we have a fight, we have a battle, we have an enemy, an adversary who wars against us. This isn't an adversary that is of flesh and blood that we see, that we can feel and sense, but it's a spiritual foe. He tells us it is an adversary that is dark, that we fight against cosmic powers, people and spirits that influence thought. And the reality is this goes on in this world, and guess what? We live in this world.

So it's very real to us. Dave's passage that he read to us, why don't you turn there with me? It's Hebrews 12. Hebrews 12 in your Bibles. If there is a passage, and Dave mentioned it, that kind of quantifies or describes what the Christian life is, I would argue that this is one of the better stronger passages that informs us of our God. So I'm going to read these first two verses of Hebrews 12, beginning in verse 1. It says, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Why is this passage so important? Well, first of all, what we're going to take a look is we're going to see the definition of life, the definition or description of what life is. Take note at the tail end of chapter 1.

It says, Let us run with endurance the race that is set up before us. The writer of Hebrews, and you might hear me slip and say it's Paul, okay? We don't know who wrote Hebrews, but I sometimes just say Paul, okay? So don't go reporting on the internet that BK is trying to over-teach all the scholars. It just accidentally happens because I'm in Ephesians 2, okay? You with me on that? Can we have that agreement? Yes, please.

[3 : 1 9] Thank you. Thank you. All right? So the writer of Hebrews describes this life as a race. Now, we all know there's different types of races in life. I ran track about 100 meters as far as I was willing to go. 200 if the coach said you can't run the 100, you got to go do the 200, right?

But then we have these other races called marathons, which are 26 miles and only really insane people run them for joy. Anybody here run a marathon? It's okay. I actually will. All right, good. You guys are all sane.

That is awesome. Okay. But why do we understand that this race, what is it? A sprinter or a marathon? It's actually a marathon. Notice he uses the word endurance. When I was training for my track 100 meters, I worked on speed. I did very little endurance training. Worked on speed training. We use different type of techniques to help me run faster, including running downhill, being attached to these big bands. So trying to improve the resistance so I could run. But there's this word that Paul uses for to describe this race. And the word is agony. We get the word agony from this Greek word agony. So this race, this agony is described as a race that has conflict. It is a race that has strife. And it is a race that has struggle. So what Paul, or sorry, the writer of Hebrews is essentially teaching here that we are to run this struggle with endurance. Paul uses the same type of wordings in 1st and 2nd Timothy and 1st Corinthians. Let me ask you, do you feel that life is more of a marathon or more of a sprint? What does your experience teach you? It's an endurance race, right? Honestly, I wish I had everything figured out by 22. It's not. I'm 50, 38. I still don't have it all figured out, right?

The reality is life is a contest. It's a marathon. It is a struggle. If you don't know anybody who has run a marathon, there is actually preparation that has to happen. They train. And it's not just anything, any type of training. I used to belong to this gym. And this gym trainer used to mock all the marathon runners because they do have all their little posers and they'd go running. And he says, man, I am so fit I could run a marathon. So they bet him a hundred bucks, or they might have put in more, if he would go and run the marathon with them. So you know what? He didn't. Now this guy was fit. This guy was big, strong. He was in there. He could teach you anything about fitness. So he did. He went and ran that marathon. And guess what? He completed it. We did not see him for another week. He had injured his muscles. He did not wear the right uniforms. And anybody who's gone long distance running, there's a certain amount of chafing that happens with your clothes. He didn't know you're supposed to wear Vaseline and special things in different areas. So he started bleeding profusely all over his body. So he finished the race, but he wasn't well prepared. His muscles. Anyway, there's just a whole other issues. For us, we're not in great shape. We're not very prepared. And the reality is, the question you might ask is, why does life have to be a struggle? Why does it have to be a contest? Why does it have to be hard? Well, the writer here gives us several reasons why it is. He tells us of three obstacles.

So today we're going to look at a little bit of the three obstacles, and we're going to learn a little bit about God's instructions, but then we're going to get to the armor of God and how it fits in, just so you know where we're going. So the first obstacle that we face when running this marathon, it's called the weight of sin. The weight of sin. We sin, we're rebellious, we do not act according how God has programmed us. Notice in the words here, it says, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely. Paul actually describes this sin as a very particular sin, that sin clings closely. It entangles, it trips, it attacks. I don't like to, you know, and I actually like it when my wife's not here.

[8 : 27] I can tell you stories about her, but I'm going to tell you one of her greatest pet peeves with me. I don't know why she feels this way, but she does. I routinely forget to take the Kleenex out of my pants when I put them in the wash. So what happens when it goes to the wash and it goes to the dryer, guess what? Kleenex all over. What does my wife do? She usually drops the basket on by me while I'm trying to watch TV. Clean it out, right? And it's all over the place. And often I cheat. I just go and rewash it. Sometimes it's so bad, right? But that's sin. It just kind of sticks to everything. Relationships at work, friends, everything. It's just all over the place. And that's what Paul's, or the author of Hebrews, is trying to say. It clings so closely and it's hard to get off. It's like it's got a mind of its own. The word that Paul uses for the word is called harmardia, which is the general word for sin. So it's not a specific type of sin. It's just sin. Any sin that we do. So that is one of the obstacles that we have in running this race. Number two says the weight of life. It says, notice it says, lay, let us lay aside every weight. He's actually not talking about sin here. He's talking about those things that impede you in your regular day life. It could be things that just distract you. They're not sinful things. They're not bad in of themselves, but they're obstacles. They're things that busy us, things that distract us. In fact, 2 Timothy 2, 4, Paul says, no soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. I have several friends who serve as U.S. chaplain, the chaplains in the U.S. military.

Just a couple weeks ago, talking to one of them, and he belongs to a unit of men that he fought overseas with in their back, and I guess in their unit, eight of the men they came back with have committed suicide. One of the reasons why, and actually the military is trying to stamp this out, a lot of these military guys get caught in cycles of debt. In fact, the U.S. military is trying to buy those, you know, those payday loan places, you know, come and get your money now and pay exorbitant rates of interest. These companies target military guys. They're all over the bases.

They're serving overseas. They've had a hard time. They want to come back. They want to go quadding. They want to release pressure, and you don't blame them, right? They've just been in literally the closest place you're going to find to hell on earth, and one of my friends lived through that. Her husband was a Marine, came back, debt through the window, and as you guys know, when money is tight, guess what? Stuff happens in the family. You feel like there's no end.

Pride, despair, despondency sets in. So it's interesting to see how much the U.S. military has recommended. For some of us, it's not those things. It can be wrong spending, but it could be our careers, our hobbies, our sports. Relationships that we have with our friends can impede on the things that God has called us to. Like any runner knows, you have to cast off the weights of this life.

If you're going to run the race, you've got to run clean, and you've got to run lean. You can't be distracted. If you're going to be serious about this Christian life, you have to give up certain things, and some of those things are really good. I'll just use my friend as an example.

[12 : 27] If you know of Comerica Bank, it's a big bank in the U.S. He was a rising star, a lot of travel. He was in charge of overseas investments. When you're in charge of overseas investments, how much time do you think you are in America? Very little. He's got four young kids at home, and his wife just said, like, he's making boatloads of money. He said more money than he thought he would ever see in his whole life, and he's making it by the time he's 25.

And it's just traveling, and he finally just had to make that decision. So what he did, he's a pretty smart guy, just bought a company. He did not know if it was going to make it or not, but he just wanted something that he could control to keep them next to home. He traded in a life of, quote-unquote, fame and fortune for that life of family. Why? Because he understood what was important in the eyes of the Lord. And sometimes we have to, if we're serious about our kids, our wife, even our work in church, there's certain things we need to put behind us.

Then the third obstacle that we have is the weight of trials, the weight of trials. Take a look at verse 6 in Hebrews 12. It says, for the Lord disciplines the ones he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. That word chastise, that is a heavy word. Even that word discipline, we, it's a strong word, but that word chastise means it means to correct. And it, and we understand it in this life. Sometimes the Lord brings correction in our life because we are going down a horrible road that is going to lead to destruction. And that correction is painful, but it's actually done in love. You who are parents know exactly what I'm talking about. Sometimes your child needs a slap in the hand because they keep touching the stove. They don't understand that slap as a hurt, but you know it is going to save them from so much more pain, right? And sometimes it's even sin. When we're in sin,

God brings major corrections. We read in 1 Corinthians 5, a man is in a, an unrighteous relationship with his stepmother. And Paul actually recommends, give him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh so his soul might be saved. Like this guy could do so much damage that he's hoping Satan will just kill him.

Just so his soul can be saved. So sometimes there's these tough instances in life where we have chosen to sin and we choose to suffer.

[15 : 19] But sometimes when he uses this word discipline, it's not, it has nothing to do with sin or anything that we did wrong. And the word discipline means to educate, to bring up a child. It's not attached to any consequences, but it's used for the child's spiritual and moral formation. Like any athlete who's someone who trains, no pain, no gain, right? So I was told this week that when I preach, I've been known to use sports analogies, baseball stories. Well, I got another one for you. All right. They're loved so much. All right. I want to introduce you to a guy named Dwight Dewey Evans. Rick, you got his picture?

These are, I have his baseball cards. These are his baseball cards. He played for the Boston Red Sox. You probably did not or have not heard of this guy. Rick has, but this week he is being considered for the hall of fame of baseball, which in baseball is the greatest honor that someone can achieve.

There was this special voting that happened for him. He didn't make it. If you don't get 5% of the votes, they forget you, but they've created this new committee to say, maybe people didn't really understand the guy that much or what went on in his, his career. So I'll tell you what his statistics were. He hit 272. If you don't know what that means, it means hits the ball 27% of the time, which to be considered good, you hit 300. So he's below that bar. He had 2,446 hits.

Good. 3,000 is automatic entrance into the hall of fame. And he hit 385 home runs. You're considered good to great if you hit 400 to 500. So he's just under this bar. Nobody ever thought he was an MVP or anything great. He played for 21 years. He was recruited as an 18 year old and began his career at 21. Why am I bringing him up? One author writing for his enshrinement this week wrote this incredible story about him. So he was 21 years old. He started playing. By the time he's 23, he's married and he has three kids. Two of his kids have neurofibromatosis. Okay. I know I'm not pronouncing that right.

Do you guys know what elephant man's disease is? Two of his kids have that. It means tumors are growing all over your body and his spine. So for the first 16 years of his life, his whole life was going to the baseball park and then he spent the rest of the life at the hospital. No one knew this.

[18 : 21] It was not spoken about. When he came to that game, he never talked about, yeah, it's been a tough day. He didn't get any sleep last night. My kid's 16th surgery in 16 years is coming up. He never talked about those type of things. From 1974 to 1989, every day in the hospital with his kids.

But every time he was at the hospital, he was recognized as a man who was 100% there. One writer wrote this quote and he's quoting a guy named Carl Yastrzemski, who's another baseball Boston legend. He says, he says, we knew about it, but there was nothing we could do. He used to tell me that he knew that to play this game, you had to be 100% mentally at the park.

But he says, how do you do that when your kids are in the hospital? And what's interesting that holds him back is he never had any great years, but he was always consistently good. Never won an MVP. No one ever really talked about him, but he had an above average performance for most of his life. We know that many baseball players didn't lead good lives, but there's nothing bad that has been ever said about this man. Will he get in or get not? Get in or not? I don't know. But you know what? People could say it's not fair. And that's what the guy says.

Nobody else had to live through this. He deserves to be in the Hall of Fame. If he didn't have that problem, he could be so much better, so much greater. In fact, the other guys that he played with are in the Hall of Fame and statistics show he's better than all those guys. Not all of them, but a few of those guys. You know what? He's never mentioned this. He's issued no article, no complaints. He just understands that that is life.

You see, the imposition of painful consequences or other disadvantages which somehow come upon us, some for disobedience or some just being a part of life.

[20 : 37] Sometimes life is so overwhelming through life's circumstance that it hurts. It is painful. I believe every single one of us can relate to some aspect of the Christian life from this text.

Now, Satan has a purpose in every single one of these obstacles that he wants to happen. He wants you to lose faith. He wants you to lose faith. He wants you to get tired. He wants you to get worn down. He wants you to get frustrated with how unfair life is. He wants you to get mad and angry.

At your sin. Now, let me tell you something about the context upon which this book of Hebrews is written. It's written by a Jewish man to Jewish believers who no longer lived in Jerusalem.

They were being persecuted in Jerusalem and now they set out. They set out in different parts, all over Middle East. They were living for their faith. They were strong in their faith.

They gave glory for the things God did. But through time, life got hard. When you're Jewish and you come into Jewish, if you know a Jewish community, it's very tight at that time. You're living in a foreign land.

[21 : 59] But all of a sudden, you start following this man named Jesus. All of a sudden, you're not being invited to the bat mitzvahs. You're not being invited to the birthday parties of your brothers, your sisters, or your friends.

Why? They follow that Jesus guy. They're not Jewish anymore. They've renounced the faith. All of a sudden, they don't do as well in business.

People don't come to their store very often. Next thing you know, they're going bankrupt. They're losing their faith and they are fearful. And they start having this thought, maybe I need to go back.

Maybe I need to jettison this Christianity and go back to my Jewish system. Let me go back to the works, back to the temple, back to the laws. Because it's easier than this.

Can you relate? Does life ever feel like you're holding on by a thread and you don't know what to do? Well, I'm here to tell you that God gets you.

[23 : 10] In fact, Jesus gets you. And there are people in this church that get you. Because they've been there.

Your situation, your hardship, your challenge of life is not unique. And it's not individual to you. Do you know that? So easy to think that way. No one will understand.

Well, this writer of Hebrews gives these people who are losing their faith four pieces of advice. First one is, you need to look to Jesus.

You need to understand who Jesus is. It's right there in verse two. He is the founder and perfecter of the faith. He's the guy who lived with God and became a baby.

He didn't come down to some great glorious king and conquered. No, he came in a baby. Did he show up as a king's baby? No. He actually showed up in the most meager, poorest type of situations and endured the hardships of life.

[24 : 12] Why? So he gets us. He did as he gets us. Philippians talks about how he poured himself out. Gave up all his rights, all his powers.

And came here as the most vulnerable person to one of the most vulnerable people groups of the world. And then we know he endured the cross.

It says he despised the shame. He was heartbroken over Judas, deserting him. He saw many people walk with him and then walk away.

Jesus knew what it meant to be hungry, to sleep, to feel pain, both physical and emotional. Breaking his heart, worrying for Peter. Peter, my friend, Satan has asked my permission that he may sift you like wheat.

I'm going to pray for you. But of all the people praying for you, that's the guy I want praying for me, right? Now number two here. Consider what Jesus endured.

[25 : 27] Verse three. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. Get this? Jesus did nothing wrong. You know what?

Sometimes I have hardship because I did some wrong, stupid things in my life. I ticked off the wrong people because I called my boss a jerk. Who knew? Right?

Jesus did not do that. This is a man who lived perfectly with love. He didn't say he wanted Herod's throne. He didn't say he want the Roman throne. In fact, when they challenged him every time, render under Caesar what is Caesar's.

Caesar's. I don't care. My kingdom is in heaven. But they hated him. There's reasons why people hate us.

Jesus? Nah. Matthew 10 even tells us that, guess what? People are even going to hate you because of me. Why? Because he was wise, kind, loving.

[26 : 30] When do you think we follow Jesus, we'd be loved? Wow, you follow the bestest, bestest man who ever lived. Amen, we do. It's funny.

When someone says they're an atheist, you notice they're not a Hindu atheist or a Muslim atheist or a Sikh atheist. They are a Christian atheist. I'm not saying there's exceptions to the rules.

There is. But by and large, you deal YouTube right up. Give me an atheist who hates God. It's always the God of the Bible. It is always Jesus Christ. From the dawn of time, God and his ways have been despised.

I used to work with a lot of Muslims in my old profession. A lot of them. Part of my job was recruiting them. Many of them hated their religion, would consider themselves irreligious, but not a single one would say they were atheist.

They would say unsure. They certainly weren't following the Koran. Consider him who endured so much.

[27 : 45] This man, before he went to the cross, prayed for you and I. He prayed in John 17 that we would endure, that we would be united.

The third truth that we see is look at verse 7. It says, It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. You are a child of God.

You know that? You are a child of God. Yes, he disciplines you. The Bible says God disciplines the ones he loves. Our trials are proof of our parentage.

What kind of parent doesn't discipline their children and still claim to love them? Some do. But the reality is, when you see a parent who's not training their children, you know who's going to do it?

Their friends, right? I used to do first year residence, university. These kids would come in totally undisciplined. They've got to live with 30 other kids.

[28 : 49] And that, you know those guys discipline that guy pretty quickly. He was either shunned or told, You need to get in line with the rest of us. You're not going to leave your shower stall like that.

You're not going to leave your garbage in the hallway. You're going to abide by the rules of this society that we have. Right? Or, some of them, they don't clue in then.

Then for some reason they land a wife or a husband. Then they have to deal with years of counseling, working things out. Sooner or later, it catches up with you.

What it basically says is tough times do mean God's love for you. God's love for you is true.

It means God has a purpose for you. He wants to do something with you. It may not appear glamorous, but he wants you to be strong, and he wants you to understand.

[29 : 50] One of the greatest painful things in my life was being a divorced kid at the time.

Couldn't figure it out. Didn't know why. What was God's purpose? We lost friends. We lost family. And then I remember sitting there. I was in CSIS. I'm about 28 years old, and I'm doing a Bible study at my college ministry.

And I've got 14 guys in my Bible study, and everyone comes from a divorced family. At that time, I recognized that God had something for me to share. Who knew it was going to be these 14 guys, most of them computer programmers or in government.

I got their pain. I didn't want that pain to have, but I did. And number four, I want you to take a look at this one. This one's a great one. Verse one.

Notice it says, Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. A lot of people, if you've ever heard them teach on this, they say it's like this big race you're running in a stadium, and they're all cheering you on.

[30 : 55] That's not what's going on there. Notice the word therefore. What does it say? You know, we hear therefore go backwards. What do we have in Hebrews 11? Turn with me quickly to grade 11.

Grade 11. Chapter 11. I'm already back in school. Chapter 11 is known as the great hall of fame of faith. These are the people who endured.

These are the people who persevered. Verse one. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for. The convictions of things not seen. That doesn't mean things that are not true, but it is a faith built upon, it's not built upon what I feel or how strongly I fear it, the inner core of my heart.

It's actually a faith built on the testimony of those who came before us and told us that God is great. That is what our foundation is based on.

You know that? That is the foundation of our faith. God is good. God is great. He is faithful. He is unwavering. He is unchangeable. Number three.

[32 : 03] Verse three, sorry. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God. That doesn't mean the Bible created it. It meant the word of God.

God said, earth be. Guess what? It became. That's how this world was created. So that what is seen was not make out things that are visible.

Why do believers in Christ believe the creation account that the world was created out of nothing? Because the one who created it was there and told us.

That's it. No one else can tell us this. If it's untrue, God is a liar. Because the one who is there, the one who created it, said so.

And he is the only credible witness we have. Now I do not have time to read through this whole chapter and I would encourage you, go home this afternoon, read it.

[33 : 07] It just goes through these incredible stories of people. But it says, by faith Abel, by faith Enoch, by faith Noah, by faith Abraham, by faith Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Rahab.

There was faith in the good and faith in the bad. Now take a look at verse 32. And the writer says, what more shall I say, my friends, who are hurting, who are despairing, that want to give up on life?

For time would fail me to tell you of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David, Samuel, and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lying, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

By faith, God's people did great things. Amen? But it doesn't end there. And this is where it really gets incredible.

Verse 35, women received back their dead by resurrection. That's hardship.

[34 : 24] Some were tortured, refusing to accept release so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains of imprisonment.

Verse 37, they were stoned. They were sawn in two. They were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy.

Wandering about in desert and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. what happens here may not have much of a bearing here on earth, but it does in heaven in the eyes of God.

Amen? Are you guys familiar with Jeanette McConaughy? You know Jeanette who goes here. If you don't know her story, she's 80 years old. She has a husband who's got dementia.

She has a young son, Stuart. He used to sit at the very front. He's got Down syndrome. Couldn't get residency for him, so no medical care, so she's back home in Scotland getting care for her son and he's literally dying.

[35 : 46] Meanwhile, she had to leave her husband here who is fending for his life just with dementia and the issues that that causes. When we get the emails, they're heartbreaking, right?

I know Dave, you can get an update from Dave. He called her the other day. Just how is her faith sustaining? Her son will die and then she will return to take care of her husband who's got dementia.

Is life fair? Life easy? But she's holding on, right? She's holding on to Jesus. This faith, how important is this faith?

Hebrews 11, 6 tells us. It says, and without faith, it is impossible to please God. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

If you're here, you're unsure about God, tell him. I want to know you. I want to know this God of the Bible who these people speak about and live for.

[36 : 56] Now, you might be asking yourself, what in the world is BK talking to me about Hebrews 12 and life? I thought we were in the armor of God. What I have just described for you is the shield of faith.

This is the shield of faith that Paul talks about in Ephesians 6. When you take up the shield of faith, you look to Jesus.

You consider him who endured so much. You hold on to the promise that he loves you. And you agree with the testimony of all these saints that came before you that said, yeah, I was sought in too.

But trust me, he's good. He's faithful. And he will hold you through. He is just.

He is right. He is holy. And he's good. And you need to trust him. All right, I got a picture of a shield here for you.

[38 : 07] This is what a Roman shield looked like. It was a scutum. It was a two by four, usually made of wood, and it had an outline of metal. And the purpose of the metal is, oftentimes, enemy archers would light their arrows on fire and bombard the enemy.

And the metal would obviously not catch on fire. So it would ricochet the arrow. They used to attach these little bags sometimes on these arrows of flammable fluid.

So when it came and the arrow smashed, the bag would break and it spread flame. And what was interesting as these darts were being sent to them, it would never burn them, but it would scare you, right? You got fire going on.

If any of you can put up with blood and gore, perfect description of this is the movie Gladiator. If you ever watched the first 20, 25 minutes, probably one of the most incredible recreations of what a battle looked like during that time.

You see, the shield of faith does not look inward. It does not look inward to say, I have the faith, I will endure, and I look to myself. The shield of faith always looks outward.

[39 : 17] It's pointing outwards and it's always pointing to God. Right? Sometimes we feel good. We listen to a good worship song that encourages us, but that's not what he's calling us.

He's calling us to remember the points of God. If you're familiar with any cult, you know what cults want you to do? Cults want you to believe in your heart. They do. I don't know if you guys know anything about Mormons.

One of my good friends became a Mormon. They opened a temple in my hometown. I started doing this research. And they believe Roman-like people lived here in North America. And that they were massacred by Native Americans.

Right? Okay. There is no archaeological evidence that supports this whatsoever. None. They've tried. They can't find any.

And when I go to my friend and I ask him, why do you believe that? Oh, I have faith. Like if you could prove to me that Israel never existed and there was no cross, I would have no faith in Jesus Christ.

[40 : 19] It's based on something. That's what cults do. They want you. Then you get into this thing called legalism. You try to earn it and make yourself feel good.

No, no. The shield is God. We look to him. We trust him. We trust his word. We trust his promises. Because that besetting sin that I talked about, what the writer of Hebrews is talking about, it's doubt.

Doubt is that besetting sin that entangles us and cleans us out. It's totally referenced to faith in verse 11. That is Satan's major weapon of warfare. Like an arrow that has a pitch bag in it, doubt splatters everywhere.

Shield breaks, but now let's take a look at verse 16 here. Notice it says in the ESV, it says, in all circumstances. Okay, and I want to draw your attention to something here.

He's trying to convey an idea that doesn't come through here. And I'll explain to you why. Basically, what he's trying to say is above all or addition to.

[41 : 25] we've been studying this belt of truth, a breastplate of righteousness, right? In these shoes.

And I want you to take a look at this verse here. Verse 14. Notice we've been studying having fastened on the belt of truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and on the shoes for your feet having put on readiness.

Let's go to the next verse, Rick. But the next one, he says, take up the shield, take up the helmet, and take up the sword of the spirit. What he's saying is the rest of the stuff you're supposed to have always on.

Having on, it's a passive action. The Roman soldier always had that uniform on. But guess what he did when he rested? Take off his helmet, set his shield aside, but that breastplate didn't come off.

The belt stayed on. The shoes, even in the pitch of battle, you needed to rest, right? So what he's calling for is there's going to be times, such intense times of attack, you need to take these parts of the armor.

[42 : 31] They're not far off, but these are something that you take up. You're ready for the battle. You get ready. There's a means of immediacy to the activity.

Now let's go back to this idea of doubt. The fact of the matter is faith isn't fixed. Sometimes we feel we have a lot of faith.

Sometimes we have a little faith. But that faith is never in us, right? Is that me changing or God changing? When I have little faith, does that mean God has been less faithful?

You can say this out loud. If I have little faith, is God being less faithful? No. So even when I'm hurting and I have less faith, God's faith is still strong.

That is the faith I'm holding to. It's never based on my faith. And that is the shield, right? He is the object of that faith.

[43 : 34] He never changes. Now Satan wants to undermine that faith. Satan wants you to doubt God's word. He wants you to doubt God's goodness. He wants you to doubt God's love.

You see, when your faith begins to waver, you go elsewhere to deal with your anxiety, right? Your lack of patience rather than deal with the issues that maybe come up in marriage.

What do you do? You divorce. At work, you quit your job. Your kids are annoying you. You just ignore them and don't care and check out as a dad and just can't wait till they get out.

Sometimes you lash out in anger, you hurt, you gossip. Now, how is this shield used? First of all, I need you to understand that the shield is not used in hand-to-hand combat.

It's too big. It's two feet by four feet. Big thick of wood with a piece of metal on it. You're not fighting very good. You see, this type of shield is used in major warfare.

[44 : 43] It's used to be made with others. Church. Your faith is made stronger being in church, being under God's word, being disciplined by others, experiencing the fellowship.

Because when silly thoughts come into your mind, guess what? Your friends say, yeah, you're kind of off on that. Why do I know that? Take a look at Hebrews 12. Go back in your Bibles.

I'm going to put it up here anyway. Don't worry about it. Hebrews 12, 11. It ends with this one verse. It says, for the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who've been trained by it.

Next. Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees and make straight paths for your feet. In the original language, the idea is, you're not lifting your hands, you're not strengthening your knees, you're lifting up the hands that are next to you.

It's an action done on someone else. Those straight paths for your feet, it's so, you know, like some people are crazy.

[46 : 00] They walk all over. They live all over. You don't want to follow that. They're messed up. Someone tells you they're going to Pemberton and they're driving to Vancouver and going the other way. Ignore them.

Right? Follow Dustin. He'll get you there quick. Like, unless you got a really cool 4x4 and you really want to have fun, but, right? Some people just live so erratically in this life that's not who we're called to be, but we're actually being commanded to have straight paths, so quit confusing people with your life.

You're responsible to how the faith is demonstrated here in this church. There's a great scene in Gladiator. I was going to try to clip it out, but then I'd have to get licensing and all this kind of stuff, but the guy's calling all the people.

Go back to that, the Roman soldier. That's called a turtle formation, and there's this really one big guy who's strong and he thinks he can fight the battle on his own and he goes off on his own and the rest are in the turtle formation and arrows are flying all over him and there's this one big, super strong, like Arnold Schwarzenegger kind of guy, and sure enough, he gets hit from the back, he gets an arrow in the leg and he's out.

And they actually go in and they drag him back in. That's what we're supposed to do for the church too. When one of our silly sheep get out, we're supposed to go grab them and bring them back because they're just going to die out there.

[47 : 34] See, the author is talking about lifting the drooping hands and the weak knees that are around you. the fact is your life is not your own. So for you who have gone through horrible situations, whether it's being enduring cancer, enduring loss of a child, perhaps it's a child's faith, there's so many to name, you guys know them.

You're called to minister to the people that are just like you or were like you and you're the ones that are supposed to say, hey, it's hard to trust right now but I'm going to pray with you.

I'm going to hold your hand. I'm going to pick you up for church. I know you don't want to go. You're not feeling it. Let me read you your Bible today. Now let's take a look at verse 17.

I know I don't want to get too long here and notice it says and take the helmet of salvation. Guess what happens when doubt overtakes your life? Sometimes it leads to sin.

When it leads to sin, it leads to despair. It leads to depression. It leads to hopelessness. Then we start to wonder, does God really love me? He didn't do this for me.

[48 : 52] Maybe I'm not saved. Maybe I'm not saved. Maybe that profession of faith and the change in my life that I experienced earlier is no longer there. I've got no use for God.

Be away with you. It's interesting and I've mentioned this quickly before. One of my friends has done his PhD dissertation is on what's called Christian deconversion.

Why people who once walked in the faith left the faith. There's five essential reasons why it happens. First reason is they find that there's contradictions between science and the Bible.

There's something there they just can't connect. Two, they find there's an error in the Bible that they don't understand so they leave the faith. Third, the promulgation of the internet and atheist preachers who are trying to attach people to not believe.

Fourth reason is they're hurt by someone in the church. Someone hurt them. They had a bad experience. Dustin didn't let them sing on the worship team. Whatever, right? It's or sometimes it's me.

[49 : 56] Pastor said something they didn't like. Maybe you really wanted me to give you a hug and pray but I had to go take care of my dog and I didn't notice you. I don't know. Could be anything, right? But it's a preconceived hurt.

Anyway, guess what's attached to all of those reasons? Doubt. Doubt. If you were reading the news, Hillsong worship leader said, hey, I no longer believe because I have got all these questions about science and no one can answer and it was pretty interesting.

He puts out this big blog and the response was how arrogant do you think? People do have answers for these things but we sometimes in our own world think no one will ever have an answer for this.

But the problem was he never asked anybody or didn't ask anybody. Some questions are hard. That doesn't mean God has changed or you don't understand.

Sometimes science hasn't revealed everything. Anyway, I'm going to teach you very quickly. The Bible speaks of salvation in three different tenses.

[50 : 58] There's the past tense, the present tense and the future tense. The past tense is what we theologians call justification. You have been justified before you even knew you were called and elected.

You were justified. God died on that cross and he puts you in the good column, right? It's like if you're an accountant on the ledger, you're in the black, not in the red. The present is called sanctification.

It's now that I recognize I'm a savior, I'm a believer, I live in that faith. Okay? My works do not make me a Christian but I'm living out the reality of my salvation that happened in the past.

It's based on what Jesus Christ did on the cross. Amen? So I live in that. So it's a past, present. The future word is called glorification. It is that hope that we have for salvation.

Satan wants to undermine that hope that we have. But the Bible actually promises that if you are saved you will endure.

[52 : 04] We see verses we are called to work out our salvation. It's not saying that by our works we are saved. Paul talked about by our works we know we are saved.

If we have no desire for what God called us to chances are you're probably not saved. Right? But if you are saved you will endure.

To hope in yourself and the you holding on to that salvation is a lousy way to go because if you think your salvation is based on your works and your good things you do you will screw up.

You might not murder someone but you might gossip for the thousandth time and God say that's it I'm done with you. That's why we believe in what's called the preservation of the saints or you might have heard it as once saved always saved.

Why do I believe this? Let's go to Jude 24. This is the helmet of salvation summed up for us in this most compelling verse. If you're not familiar with Jude the letter Paul writes to a group of people who are being influenced by false teachers and he concludes the letter by saying now to him that is Jesus who is to keep you from stumbling.

[53 : 29] So all those times that we endured those temptations that we know we could have gone down guess who was holding us? It was Jesus. And guess this to present you blameless before the presence of his glory.

So at the end of time when we appear before God it's like Jesus is taking us and notice the word that it's using his attitude. He's presenting us perfect before God with great joy.

We know we're not there. We're not perfect, right? We're understanding that there was nothing. The reason I survived those temptations in university or at work, the reason I didn't embezzle, the reason I didn't cheat with that man or that woman, whatever it is, was because Jesus Christ was there perfecting my faith for me.

and it says to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ, our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever.

Amen. Jesus is the one who keeps us from stumbling. Jesus is the one who presents us to his glory to God and we're presented blameless.

[54 : 56] Satan's called the accuser. You know who's right there? Satan, look at her. She's horrible. Horrible mother. Cheater, liar. He's going to sit there and Jesus is like, nope.

She's blameless because she lives by my blood. My friends, if you are in sin and you feel shame, the greatest thing you can do is run to God, not run from God.

sometimes we need to repent of her sin and we have to repent of not running to him in the first place, right? Oh, Lord, you're going to be all embarrassed again of me. You know what I did again? That's Satan telling you that.

That's not the Holy Spirit telling you that. That's the lies of the evil one. See, God wants to draw you in so that you will know him better, his gracious, his goodness.

He wants you to put on that shield. Notice what it says in that verse. Notice it says all the darts of the evil one. It doesn't say some darts.

[56 : 10] It doesn't say if you were going to get through. But that shield is enough for all the darts. My question for you is, is your shield big enough?

Is your God big enough? I'm going to pray for you.