



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Build a Better Shield of Faith-Faithfulness

Bible Reading: Eph. 6:10-16; 1 Jn. 5:4-5, 19

[Watch LIVESTREAM here at 10am](#)

[Join our post-sermon discussion on Zoom at 11am](#)

[Join our citKids Connect discussion at 11am](#)

SUMMARY: Paul charges us to 'take up the shield of faith' in order to repulse the devil's attempts to distract, deceive & discourage us. But, what is this 'faith'? Christians are not just generic 'people of faith,' nor vaguely 'spiritual.' Biblical faith is not mere assent to church creeds, nor simply passive trust. The bedrock of Christians' belief is Jesus Christ; he's the 'capital' for their lifelong commitment. The Bible's term for 'faith' (Greek: *pistis*) encompasses belief, trust, & loyalty (faithfulness), issuing in action. This key word describes the faithfulness of God & Christ, the believing that unites us to Him, plus the fruit of faithfulness in our lives. When we respond to the Lord's leading with believing obedience we build our faith and faithfulness; faith's 'shield' is enhanced. Faithful following enrolled the OT saints in God's 'Hall of Faith,' where each record starts with the words, "By *faith*..." May we leave a similar mark!

“Shield of Faith” (Eph. 6:16)–Preliminaries

- A. In the OT God & his faithfulness are a “Shield” (Gen. 15:1; Ps. 18:2; 91:4, etc.)
- B. Faith as a Shield
- C. “In all situations take up the shield of faith” (Eph. 6:16a)
 - We “‘Take up’ the shield of faith by doing what God asked [us] to do...” –Priscilla Shirer
- D. The shield “extinguishes the devil’s fiery arrows” (Eph. 6:16b)

What Counts: Not your Faith’s Strength, but its Object

- “It’s not the strength of your faith, but the object of your faith, that actually saves you. Strong faith in a weak branch is fatally inferior to weak faith in a strong branch.” –Tim Keller
- A. Christian Faith is Faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:22; Eph. 3:12)
 - “*The emphasis falls not on ‘faith,’ but on the Christ on whom faith is founded...What matters is not the subjectivity of belief, but the focus & basis of that faith...Christ.*” –John Barclay
- B. Not Faith’s Strength, but its Object
- C. Christians—the ‘believing ones’ (Gk. *pisteuon*) (Rom. 1:16)
 - “Paul...is talking not just about initial acceptance...but...[also] the life that follows from it as the whole process”–J. Dunn
- D. Christian life—a life of faith –“*We walk by faith, not by sight.*” (2 Cor. 5:7; cf. Gal. 2:20)

Going Deeper— what’s meant by the Gk. *Pistis*—Faith, Faithfulness...?

- A. Armor of God—God’s own Attributes
 - The Armor Items – ‘truth & righteousness’ are God’s attributes; what about faith?
- B. What’s the meaning of the Greek word for ‘Faith’—*Pistis*? (Eph. 6:16)
 1. “Faithfulness’ might be the most appropriate translation of *pistis* in Eph. 6:16”– Thomas Yoder Neufeld
 - Faith = Belief + Trust + Loyalty = ‘Believing Allegiance’
 - “*Faith...entails faithfulness*; [so] some...translate *pistis* as ‘believing allegiance’...‘Faith’ is...*not merely intellectual assent, but faithfulness—a total commitment* of the self...akin to loyalty, obedience, & devotion.”–Michael Gorman C. Faith issues in Action (1 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 11:4, 8, 11, [etc.])
 - “We recall...*your work produced by faith*” (1 Thess. 1:3)
 - “*By faith...*” (Heb. 11:4, 8, 11, [etc])
 - “Faith is acting like God is telling the truth. The key...is *action*...Faith is...adapting...your whole lifestyle so...it accords with what God has asked you to do...The act of faith...becomes a shield...against the enemy’s attacks.” –Priscilla Shirer

The Faithfulness (Gk. *pistis*) of God, Christ & the Believers

- A. The Faithfulness [Gk. *pistis*] of God (Dt. 7:9; Rom. 3:3)
 - “Know that the LORD your God is God, *the faithful* (Heb. *Emet*) God who keeps his gracious covenant loyalty.” (Dt. 7:9)
 - “If some [in Israel] were unfaithful, will their unfaithfulness nullify *God’s faithfulness [pistis]?*” (Rom. 3:3)
- B. The Faithfulness [Gk. *pistis*] of Christ (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 3:2)
 1. “...Fix your thoughts on Jesus...² He was *faithful* [Gk. *pistis*] to the one who appointed him...” (Heb. 3:1-2) ? Christ’s “obedience cannot be separated...from his *pistis*. Therefore *his faith is his faithfulness.*”–Markus Barth
- C. Believers share Christ’s faithfulness [*pistis*] (Gal. 2:16, 20; Eph. 3:12 ISV/NET)
 - “The life...I’m now living...I *live by the faithfulness of the Son of God*, who loved me & gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20 ISV)
 - “*Pistis Christou* [‘faith of Christ’ is] *simultaneously Christ’s faithfulness to God & human faith in Christ.*”–Teresa Morgan
 - “Christ became what we are in order that we might become what he is’ [righteous, faithful, etc.]”–Morna Hooker
- D. The Fruit of the Spirit is “Faithfulness” (Gal. 5:22)
 - “But *the fruit of the Spirit is* love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness [Gk. *pistis*]...” (Gal. 5:22)
- E. God Values & Rewards Faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:1-2; Mt. 25:21, 23; 1 Tim. 1:12)
 - “Think of us...as Christ’s servants & managers of God’s mysteries...It’s required that *managers be...faithful.*” (1 Cor. 4:1-2)
 - “Well done, good & *faithful servant!*” (Mt. 25:21, 23)
 - “I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord...because *he considered me faithful...*” (1 Tim. 1:12)

The Shield of Faith & Faithfulness (Eph. 3:12; 6:16)

A. “Christ and *his faith* [*faithfulness*] can be meant by the ‘shield of faith’—Markus Barth

B. “In Eph. 6:16...Paul is speaking more...on fidelity (faithfulness) than on belief.” V. Wisniewski

QUESTIONS:

Many people today identify as “people of faith.” What (if anything) distinguishes Christian believers from those who identify as “people of faith”? Discuss.

Tim Keller says, “It’s not the strength of your faith, but the object of your faith, that actually saves you.” What do you think he means by this statement? So, what should be “the object of our faith”?

The term “believers” applies to Christians. In Rom. 1:16 Paul calls Christians ‘*believing ones*’ (present tense), not merely, “*those who have believed*” (a past historical event). What does this imply about the role of faith/believing in our lives?

The Greek word rendered ‘faith’ in the NT –*Pistis*— has a wider range of meanings, including ‘belief, trust, loyalty, faithfulness, allegiance’ (depending on the context). How does this help us understand the following concepts:

- A. Shield of *faithfulness*—“‘Faithfulness’ might be the most appropriate translation of *pistis* in Eph. 6:16”—T. Y. Neufeld
- B. Priscilla Shirer’s assertion: “Faith is acting like God is telling the truth. The key thought is *action*...”
- C. How would you relate this to statements like, “*By faith* [Abraham...did something]” (Heb. 11:4, 8, etc.)
- D. The *pistis* of God (does that mean God has/needs ‘faith’?)
- E. The *pistis* of Christ (does that mean Jesus Christ had/has/needs ‘faith’?)
- F. Christian’s *pistis* is not merely a subjective inclination towards (confidence in) God/Christ, but includes action g. The ‘fruit of the Spirit’ includes *pistis* (Gal. 5:22)
- G. “*Pistis* is being used [here (Gal. 5:22) as] ‘obeying faith,’ something one does.”—Nijay Gupta

The “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11 has statements like: “*By faith* [Abraham...did something]” (Heb. 11:4, 8, etc.) Do you have an experience of taking some action “*by faith*,” in response to the Lord’s leading to you. (If so, share). How did that experience help build up your confidence (faith) for the future? Can you relate this to “building a better shield (of faith)”?