

The Lord is Our Shield

Meditation #1 A Shield of Finest Materials

It seems like shields have been around almost as long as warfare has been around. The sizes, shapes, and materials change over time, depending on the fighting style. We've gone from shields made of wood and animal hides to metal and Kevlar, all to protect the body as best we can.

Whether or not you've had to wear some kind of shield or body armor into a battle to protect yourself, we need shields today. We're all fighting a spiritual warfare that has been waging since the Garden of Eden. The old evil foe questioned Eve, "Did God really say...?" The first shot was a question, a question of God's Word meant to chink their trust in God, a question meant to create doubt regarding God's goodness.

Satan hasn't really updated his tactics since then. Shot after shot, he wants to kill us by attacking the trustworthiness of God. Many have been pierced by his questions. They no longer wonder, "Did God really say...?" Instead, they declare definitively that the Bible is corrupt, that it is the word of men with their own agendas. They declare that the Bible that we have is full of lies. Not only is Satan firing these shots, but also a world of unbelievers. The core of their tactics in this spiritual warfare is to declare that God can't keep his Word, that he isn't strong enough to do so, that he gives us shoddy material to protect ourselves.

That's what people and Satan say, but what does God say? God says that his Word is trustworthy and true, words from an unfailing God as he keeps every single one of his promises. He proves this as he has foretold the future and it has come to pass exactly as he has said it would. He only ever tells the truth while the devil is the father of lies, that they all the lies originate from him. God says that his Word will never be lost, not even the least stroke of a pen, until all of it is fulfilled. History has shown that the Word of God has been faithfully preserved and the message has remained.

So, what will you shield yourself with? Will you shield yourself with what people say or with what God says? We want the shield of finest materials, the strongest Kevlar. We shield ourselves with the flawless Word of God.

A reading from Proverbs chapter 30 verse 5: **"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."**

This is the Word of the Lord, our shield. We sing **Hymn 418, stanzas 1 & 3.**

Meditation #2 Our Mobile Protection

When I think of famous shields, my brain goes to the 2017 *Wonder Woman* movie. Bullets ricochet off her shield, protecting her body, as she pushes forward through the No Man's Land of World War I. Her shield protected her on the move.

It's a scary world out there with not only a world of unbelievers who want us to discard the Word of God, our shield, but also Satan who spins lie after lie to us. It's so scary that at times we don't want to go out at all. Instead, we want to find a safe haven, a bomb shelter or bunker that will be our mighty fortress. We may even look at the church building this way as a place where the devils can harm us none. But it's not the building that does that protecting. Our Lord protects us because he is our shield.

Our shield is mobile protection because our Lord goes with us everywhere. Whether we are at school or work or home or in bed at night, when you are on a road trip, in the airport, up in the air, on a cruise, at the beach, out on the mountains, our Lord is with us. I don't mean that we always have a Bible in our pockets or a Bible app on our phone. Our God goes with us by faith, by virtue of our baptisms. He and his Word live in our hearts. It's on our minds and on our lips. He protects us wherever we go.

Satan can bring the biggest, meanest armies against us. The world can be filled with devils. Thousands can fall by your side. People can destroy our bodies. Yet God will not allow harm to come to your soul. He is our mobile protection, and we ask God our shield to be with us wherever we go.

A reading from Psalm 91: ¹ **Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.** ² **I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."** ³ **Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.** ⁴ **He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.** ⁵ **You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,** ⁶ **nor the pestilence that stalks in the**

darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. ⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. ⁸ You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. ⁹ If you say, "The LORD is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, ¹⁰ no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. ¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; ¹² they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. ¹³ You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ¹⁴ "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. ¹⁵ He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. ¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

This is the Word of the Lord, our shield. We sing **Hymn 440, stanzas 1 & 2.**

Meditation #3 A Wall of Shields

Satan knows that we're easier to pick off and kill if we are by ourselves. We get tired, worn out, sometimes feeling that we can't lift our Lord, our shield, any longer. We can't watch our own backs; we can get flanked. We need help. We need more than ourselves and our abilities in this spiritual warfare.

There was a battle formation - perfected by either the Greek phalanx or the Roman Legion, depending on who you talk to – that was a wall of shields. The person on your left used their shield to help cover and protect your body. The people behind you watched your back. They realized the truth that they were stronger together, and made a battle tactic out of it.

The church is not the walls of this building; the church is the people, the gathering of those who trust in God to shield them from all harm and danger. Satan wants you to believe that your faith in God is just between you and God, that it's only a personal faith, a private faith. But that's a lie, another shot to separate us from other Christians so that we are easier to take down.

Instead of trying to stand one on one with the devil and his followers, it's better if we soldier up with a wall of shields. God designed us as his followers to be a gathering of Christian soldiers. He designed us to share our lives with others, especially our faith lives. Look to your left and your right. Look forward and backward. We're in this together, and we are stronger together. We rally around the Word of God and each other. We open up to others as to the battles we face. Together, we bear each other's burden. Together we recall that all of Satan's arrows, all his accusations against us, come to nothing because God protects us as our shield. God stood in our place and was pierced for our transgressions. In doing so, he has taken away all our sins. We are declared not guilty because Christ is our shield who took the flaming arrows of the evil one. We are shielded by Christ, covered with his perfection.

Let the enemy bring everything he has. We are protected by God and what he has done for us. We also have the Church, the gathering of Christian soldiers. The people with us today, they are our wall of shields along with our Lord. We are not only shielded together, but together we also will share in God's victory.

A reading from Zechariah 12:1-10: ¹ **A prophecy: The word of the LORD concerning Israel. The LORD, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person, declares:** ² "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. ³ On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. ⁴ On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness," declares the LORD. "I will keep a watchful eye over Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. ⁵ Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God.' ⁶ "On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume all the surrounding peoples right and left, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place. ⁷ "The LORD will save the dwellings of Judah first, so that the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem's inhabitants may not be greater than that of Judah. ⁸ On that day the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD going before them. ⁹ On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem. ¹⁰ And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."

This is the Word of the Lord, our shield. We sing **Hymn 536, stanzas 1 & 2.**

Meditation #4 Shields No More

The Old Testament Israelites had no shortage of enemies, but the prophet Ezekiel singles out Gog as a representation of any and all forces of evil bent on destroying God's people. The battle commenced in the previous chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy. Now, we are about to hear the outcome of that battle.

The Lord is our shield, and we desperately need him to be our shield since we are engaged in spiritual combat every day. From the accusations of Satan, from the influence of a sinful world, from our own internal struggles from our sinful nature, all of them want to separate us from God and our fellow Christians. All of them want us to fall and become a casualty of this spiritual war.

But God came into our world by taking on flesh and blood himself. Jesus engaged in one-on-one combat with Satan. He resisted. He prevailed. He overcame. Even when it looked like Satan had won as Jesus' body slumped on the cross and his side was pierced and blood flowed out, he burst forth from the tomb on Sunday, announcing to the world that he has conquered death, our sins, Satan, and hell itself. The worst enemies could not overturn Jesus' victory as the shield who was pierced for our transgressions.

The day is coming when Christ will come again. When he returns on the Last Day, all the enemies that wage war against us will be vanquished for good. We won't need any weapons anymore. We won't even need shields because there will be no danger to threaten us. On that day, all death and mourning and crying and pain will be obliterated, never to return again. On that day, our Lord will no longer be our shield, but we will dwell with him in peace and safety forever and ever.

A reading from Ezekiel 39:1-10: ¹ **"Son of man, prophesy against Gog and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshek and Tubal. ² I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you from the far north and send you against the mountains of Israel. ³ Then I will strike your bow from your left hand and make your arrows drop from your right hand. ⁴ On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals. ⁵ You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. ⁶ I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD. ⁷ " 'I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel. ⁸ It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of. ⁹ " 'Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up—the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. ¹⁰ They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD."**

This is the Word of the Lord, our shield. We sing **Hymn 417, stanzas 1 & 2.**