

## QUENCHING THE FLAMING DARTS OF THE ENEMY

If we want to be those who are practically part of God's corporate warrior in Ephesians 6, we must learn how to quench the flaming darts of the enemy. Verse 16 speaks of "having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one." These flaming darts take the form of thoughts injected into our mind that are not according to Christ (Col. 2:8; 2 Cor. 10:5). One passage in Witness Lee's ministry identifies many categories of flaming darts:

The flaming darts are the attacks from Satan as well as his intimidation, condemnation, and accusations—his lies, delusions, temptations, tests, provocations, divisions, doubts, questionings, suggestions, instigations, stimulations, snares, attacks, criticisms, judgments, despising, mockery, jealousy, and slandering. Satan's attacks include not only accusation and condemnation toward our conscience and intimidation toward our mind but also innumerable flaming darts coming into our being, some through our ears and some through our eyes. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1953, Volume 2, 534*)

Such darts at times come directly from Satan and the evil spirits that follow him, but they also come through the agency of men who are full of their own thoughts and opinions. These thoughts and opinions find expression in their words. James 3:8 says, "But the tongue no one among men is able to tame; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." Brother Lee pointed out that Darby translated the last clause in this verse as "full of death-bringing poison." Brother Lee added:

Why can the tongue not be tamed and bridled? It is because the mind has too many thoughts. When the mind is full of thoughts, the tongue exercises to express something. The thoughts are like electricity, and the tongue is like the blades of a fan. When the electricity is flowing, the blades turn. The tongue is full of death-bringing poison because the tongue passes on the thoughts like poison darts. (*Practical Lessons on the Experience of Life, 153*)

Elsewhere he related the flaming darts specifically to doubts:

The shield of faith quenches all the flaming darts of the evil one (v. 16). Most of these darts are doubts. We should give up all our doubts, not only about God but even about the believers, the brothers and sisters. The enemy constantly sends darts to make us doubt others. If we accept the darts of doubting, we will have problems with the brothers. (*Basic Principles for the Practice of the Church Life, 76*)

Many times Satan may inject critical thoughts, even slanders, concerning the ones who take the lead in the Lord's ministry and work. Brother Lee pointed this out, saying, "Of course, we also realized that Satan's fiery darts are always directed at the leading ones, and the leading ones will always be the target of Satan's attacks" (*Bearing Remaining Fruit, volume 1, 126*). Ultimately, Satan's target is to undermine the building up of the church (Matt. 16:18). Brother Lee noted, "The building is the target for all the flaming darts of the enemy" (*The Vision, Practice, and Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ, 107*).

### Taking Up the Shield of Faith

The shield against the flaming darts, according to Ephesians 6:16, is faith. Faith is of our spirit, while doubts are the product of an unrenewed mind (Rom. 4:20; 2 Cor. 4:13). Note that Ephesians 6:16 says, "Having taken up the shield of faith," meaning that the shield of faith is already in place as our protection when the flaming darts come. Watchman Nee's fellowship about this is very enlightening:

We have to remember that faith is a shield (Eph. 6:16). It is not a pair of pliers. Many people use faith as if it were a pair of pliers; they try to pull out the darts that have already been lodged into the body. But faith does not function like pliers. Faith is a shield. It is something placed between ourselves and Satan. When darts come, they hit the shield and bounce back. We do not put a shield behind us. If the shield is at our

backs, it will be difficult to protect us from the darts. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Volume 41: Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (1)*, 131)

How, then, do we take up the shield of faith? There are at least two aspects to taking up the shield of faith, and we must have both. One is related to long-term constitution. The other is related to our daily practice.

Taking up the shield of faith is the fourth item of our taking up the full armor of God listed in Ephesians 6. The first three are girding our loins with truth, putting on the breastplate of righteousness, and shodding our feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace (vv. 14-15). Brother Lee pointed out that “the shield of faith is listed as the fourth item because a genuine exercise of faith must be founded on truth, righteousness, and peace” (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1953, Volume 2*, 533). Thus, as Brother Lee explained, “Faith comes after truth, righteousness, and peace. If we have truth in our living, righteousness as our covering, and peace as our standing, we shall spontaneously have faith. Faith is a safeguard against the fiery darts of the enemy” (*Truth Lessons, Level 3, Volume 4*, 140).

To have our loins girded with truth is not merely to know the objective truths in the Bible but to know God in Christ as reality in our living. The breastplate of righteousness is for the covering of our conscience. Having our feet shod with the gospel of peace gives us a firm foundation to stand. Christ made peace through the cross (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20). Now He Himself is our peace for us to be one with God and with the saints (Eph. 2:14-15). Applying this peace through the cross is a firm foundation to stand against Satan’s attacks. Faith is the issue of having our loins girded with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having our feet shod with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace. Thus, Brother Lee said, “We can exercise faith only when God becomes the reality of our human life, when our walk and conduct are righteous, and when our self has been broken by the cross so that we have no problem with God or men. This is to have the shield of faith to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one” (CWWL, 1953, Volume 2, 533).

Taking up the shield of faith is also a matter of our daily practice. Brother Nee said, “Every morning you have to lift up this faith before God. Then you will withstand temptations without even being conscious of it” (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Volume 41: Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (1)*, 131). In particular we need to spend time with the Lord in the Word of God when we first rise up. We need to enter into the Word to touch the reality of God in Christ as the Spirit, applying the blood of Christ to have Christ as the covering of our conscience, and to enjoy Christ as our peace with God and with our fellow members of the Body. Brother Lee told the saints, “As we are waking up in the morning, often Satan will make proposals to us. For this reason, we need to get into the Word first thing in the morning. If we are not in the Word, we shall have no covering against the Devil’s proposals” (*Life-study of Ephesians*, 545).

In 1978, after learning about an undermining work being carried out by an ambitious worker, Brother Lee traveled widely to minister to the saints. Many of his messages are printed in *Life Messages*. A point of great emphasis in his speaking was the need for every believer to have a time alone with the Lord first thing in the morning. He knew that having a personal, intimate, affectionate, and spiritual time with the Lord would strengthen the saints’ sense of life and therefore their discernment of healthy speaking versus unhealthy speaking (1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:9; 2:1).

Of course, we need to reject words that spread death as they come to us, but taking care of being built up in truth, righteousness, and peace and having a fresh daily, personal contact with the Lord will make us persons of faith. Such faith will be a shield with which we can quench the flaming darts of God’s enemy, whether they come to us directly or through other persons.