

Sunday, July 14, 2013—The Battlefield of the Mind—The Shield of Faith

### **Introduction/Review**

- Over the past three weeks we have studied the first three pieces of the armor of God. So far we have seen that each piece is related to the person and work of Christ on our behalf.
  - Christ is the truth (belt of truth)—John 14:6
  - Christ is our righteousness (breastplate of righteousness)—I Corinthians 1:30
  - Christ is our peace (sandals of peace)—Ephesians 2:14
- This morning we want to consider the 4<sup>th</sup> piece of the armor of God by looking at the shield of faith.

### **The Shield of Faith**

- Ephesians 6:16—the first phrase of this verse “Above all, taking the shield of faith” is an interesting expression. It clearly off sets the shield of faith for the preceding 3 pieces of armor we have already studied. But what does it mean? Think about the protection provided by the first three pieces.
  - Belt of Truth—midsection or core (the loins of your mind)
  - Breastplate of Righteousness—the vital organs i.e., your heart and lungs
  - Sandals of Peace—footwear to anchor, ground, and provide proper footing.
- Think about how much of the body this still leaves exposed without a shield. The shield is capable of protecting the soldier’s entire body as well as offering an additional layer of defense for those regions already fortified by the other pieces of armor.
- Therefore, I don’t take the expression “Above all” to mean that the shield of faith is more important than the previous three pieces of armor, rather it serves an important function.
- There were two different shields that were available to the Roman soldier to utilize in combat.
  - Smaller Round Shield—used in hand to hand combat
  - Large 5 Foot Shield—capable protecting the soldier’s entire body
- In the ancient world and even until the advent of field guns and artillery battles usually began with archers seeking to thin out the enemy. In the Old Testament the Bible speaks about “archers” 12 times in 10 verses when speaking about warfare. The Large shield would protect the soldier’s entire body from enemy archers.
- If utilized properly entire units of Roman soldiers were afforded protection from enemy archers. To compensate for this, enemy soldiers would dip their arrows in pitch before they fired them.

When a flaming arrow hit its target the pitch would splatter and set fire to anything it touched and thereby open holes in the enemy ranks.

- Since the context here is protection against “the fiery darts of the wicked.” It makes sense that Paul has this large shield in mind here. The shield of faith protects the soft regions of the body against the flaming arrows of the adversary. Notice that the Shield of Faith does not just protection against the enemies flaming darts it quenches and extinguishes them.
- Following the patters set by the previous three pieces of armor it would seem to follow that the shield of faith is somehow related to the person of Jesus Christ. Throughout the Bible the Lord is constantly referred to as a shield.
  - Genesis 15:1—“I am thy shield”
  - Deuteronomy 33:29—“saved by the LORD the shield of thy help”
  - Psalm 3:3—“But thou o LORD art a shield”
  - Psalm 28:7—“The LORD is my strength and my shield”
- The word “shield” occurs 16 times in 16 verses in Psalms alone. Each time it occurs in the context it is referring to the LORD.
- Ephesians 6:16—so if we know that the Lord was a shield for Israel in “time past” what exactly is the “shield of faith” that Paul is talking about in this verse? Who is the truth? The word of God and the person of Jesus Christ. Who is our righteousness? Jesus Christ! Who is our peace? Jesus Christ! Where do we learn about these truths? In the Word of God
- So then what is faith? Faith is standing behind the truth of God’s word. Standing in faith behind the truth of what God’s word says about the first three pieces of armor shields the believer against the fiery darts of the wicked.
- If the LORD was a shield for Israel in time past and the first three pieces of our armor are associated with Christ we have to have confidence that Christ is worthy to be believed. This is where the faith of Christ comes in.
- Romans 3:22
- Galatians 2:16, 20
- Philippians 3:9
- I Thessalonians 5:24
- II Thessalonians 3:3

- Knowing what the Bible says and standing behind it by faith is our defense against every fiery dart and attack of the adversary.
- I Timothy 1:18—holding faith in good conscience i.e., stand behind the faith. Departing the faith is the equivalent to walking away from the shield.
- I Timothy 6:3-4, 9-10—those how have departed the faith not only have they put down the shield they have pierced themselves with arrows.
- II Timothy 2:25-26—by putting down the shield of faith they are actually opposing themselves. If you step away from the truth you step right into the snare of Devil.
  - Ephesians 4:14
- II Peter 3:15-16—they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.
- I Chronicles 12:1-8—accordign the Apostle Paul our spiritual warfare is just as real as anything physical described in these passages.
- “Our shield of faith is the issue of putting faith in the specific things God has told us, which He has specifically designed to produce comfort, consolation, encouragement, boldness, contentment, and the like.”