

Shield of Faith

Keeping the Faith in the Valleys

Acts 24

Lesson 33 in a Series about the 1st Century Church

The last few chapters of Acts (23-28) detail the events of Paul's journey to Rome. Through a series of trials with the Jewish leaders prosecuting Paul before the Roman governors, we see ample evidence of Paul's personal experience with the "spiritual armor" included in his letter to the Ephesian church.

We have seen examples as we have studied the journeys of Paul for the **Belt of Truth**, the **Breastplate of Righteousness**, and the need to have our **Feet Fitted with Readiness**. Today we are going to see an example of the importance of the **Shield of Faith**.

Paul describes our spiritual armor in Ephesians 6 by using something common to the people of his day: the armor of a Roman soldier. The shield was very large and designed to protect the body. It was made of wood and covered with leather. When the enemy would be shooting fire arrows, the shield could be soaked in water so that the flaming arrows would be extinguished as they were blocked.

...take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Ephesians 6:16

What is this shield of faith that is able to protect us from Satan's flaming arrows? Faith is acting on what one believes. We take up the shield of faith when we take the truth we read in His Word and live it out in our lives! A good example of faith in a battle setting is found in Joshua 6. This is the account of Joshua and the battle of Jericho. Marching around the city for seven days does not seem like a strong battle plan. Joshua took the shield of faith and obeyed God, and the city was delivered to Israel.

Historical accounts reveal that the Roman soldiers would line up side by side with their shields locked together as they advanced...each soldier carrying his own shield that would also protect those around him. How can this image be helpful to us in the church today? Our shield of faith will not only provide protection for ourselves but also for one another in the family of believers.

Long Hours of Inactivity

Acts 24

1 Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor.

5 "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him.

10 When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: "12...My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. 13 And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me.

24 Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus.

27 When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

What do you think all that time in a jail cell could do to your faith? Would it break you?

When Dixie Franklin traveled to Caesarea and shared her photos and experience with us, I was fascinated by ruins of the Governors Palace where Paul had been imprisoned. It was located under the palace right at the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. Damp, cold, dark and hours of nothing to do but think. What do you suppose Paul was thinking about? One of the first things that I know would come to my mind is a question. "Are you there, God?"

Check out George Washington and troops waiting in the cold at Valley Forge: www.nps.gov/history/logcabin/html/vf.html.

Flaming Arrows...Subtle Suggestions?

A few weeks ago, we had a lesson from Acts in which we discussed the "strongholds" that can be placed in our minds by Satan. He does this by sending fiery darts in the form of suggestions and doubt. Remember when the serpent asked Eve in the Garden, "*Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?*" I am convinced that Satan continues to work this way today.

It may be in the form of a doubt in your own thoughts or a question posed by someone about your belief, activity, or even your political position. Our shield of faith is willingness to act upon and advance in our belief. When we begin to question our motives on the battle field, that's like dropping our shield and taking arrows!

Questioning and "soaking" our shield needs to be done in preparation for battle, not while we're engaged in battle. As I prepare for some lessons I will present next week in Oscoda, I have had to prepare lessons from Psalm 119. This is where the soaking takes place. We see evidence in the psalmist's life, and when we immerse ourselves in the acknowledgement of His Word, we are strengthened in our faith.

What Is Faith – If Not Tested?

If everything you face on a daily basis is already proven, and there is no room for choice or doubt, there would be no need for faith. I'm confident that you will agree that not everything is clearly proven and accepted. What is the best way to educate your child? Who is the best choice for President of the United States? And I'm just getting started! We are bombarded with potentials for doubt and flaming arrows of the evil one.

Hebrews 11

1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Paul was prepared for the arrows of Satan when he arrived in Caesarea for trial. His shield of faith was soaked with the Word of God and ready to extinguish those flames of doubt and fear.

Are you prepared? Does your faith need strengthening? Now is the day to begin preparing adequately for the on-going spiritual battle for control of your mind which is Satan's path to your family and everyone else in your world.

Prepare today by reading again from God's Word. Acknowledge His control in your life. Thank Him for being your Commander.

If there is a need that we may assist you with in being prepared today, I hope you will respond to the invitation.