

## 32. The shield of faith

May 26, 2013

The African impala can leap to a height of over 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than 30 feet. Yet these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a 3-foot block wall. These animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will land.

Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with faith we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that only fear allows to entrap us.

*Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

As I've told you guys before, faith is not faith if we can see. If we can see the whole thing, it should be called as 'acknowledgement'. Faith only works when we don't see the promise that was made to us, yet trust the One who made it.

Many of us say, "I have faith in God." But when we face difficult times, some of us crumble under the pressure of our unbelief and choose not take that leap of faith in God.

There is a tremendous difference between 'everyday faith' and 'textbook faith'. We can have all the knowledge in faith that we have learned from the Bible, but if we don't actually trust God's promises, that is not faith. But the 'everyday faith' is what we need. Without seeing and knowing what God is going to do, with simple trust in His promises from the Bible, if we trust and start to do the things from that base, that is a true faith in God.

The first century soldier always kept his sandals, his belt, and his breastplate on. He never took them off unless he was off-duty. The other three pieces of armor – the shield, the helmet, and the sword were to be taken up when needed. You will notice that distinction made at the beginning of v16.

### A. THE SHIELD OF FAITH

*Ephesians 6:16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

This verse starts with two words "Above all". In other words, the other three pieces of spiritual armors must be on with us at all times since we are Christians. "Above all" means that you are now in a new arena. The battle is going to heat up and you'd better be prepared. Take up this shield of faith; you're going to need it!

The Roman soldier's shield was made of wood. They were large rectangular objects, about four feet high and two feet wide. They were very heavy because the wood had a protective metal coating on the outside to repel flaming arrows that might lodge in it. The metal served as fireproofing and protected the soldier from the arrows of the enemy.

Additionally Roman soldiers often linked their shields together, and from behind them, archers fired their arrows through the openings. This created a sort of moving bunker.

Paul's reference to fiery darts or flaming arrows relates to one of the most commonly used military tactics of his day. Prior to an actual sword-to-sword and hand-to-hand

combat with the enemy, an ancient warrior would often encounter a barrage of flaming arrows coming from all directions.

Their sole purpose was to demoralize and confuse him. The Roman soldier had to hold up his shield to protect himself and his battle buddies from those arrows.

The breastplate of a Roman soldier was not capable to stop fiery arrows because it was not thick enough, and oil-soaked clothes around the arrowhead could ignite fire on the soldier's tunic. However, by raising the shield with its protective coating, the arrows could be stopped.

In spiritual terms, satan is going to fire his flaming arrows to demoralize and confuse us. He is going to set his cross hairs on you and open fire. Be forewarned! Satan's aim is very accurate with his "fiery darts".

## **B. FIERY DARTS**

So we know what the physical side of the fiery darts or flaming arrows can do in ancient battles. But what about it in the spiritual area? What symbolic things could these arrows represent? They could be arrows of immorality, hatred, envy, pride, covetousness, doubt, worry or any other kind of sin. They come in all sizes and shapes but often they come in the realm of thoughts.

You can wake up in the morning and the enemy can hit you with a fiery dart before your feet hit the floor. It might be an impure thought; it might be a thought of hatred toward someone; it might be a blasphemous thought. You're shocked! "How could I think of something like that so early in the morning?" You feel a little guilty about it.

Then, of course, satan, the accuser of the brethren, would condemn you, "How could you think of something like that so early in the morning? What's wrong with you? What kind of a Christian are you, anyway?" Now that is very cunning, wouldn't you think? First, he fires the arrows of ungodly thoughts to our hearts, and then he condemns us for being hit with it.

It is not a sin to be tempted as I told you guys before. Even Jesus was tempted, and He was without sin. Those temptations and condemnations are fiery darts and flaming arrows.

## **C. THE STRENGTH OF YOUR SHIELD OF FAITH**

How strong is your Shield of Faith? Is it thick enough and strong enough to extinguish any fiery dart that comes from satan because you have total faith in God? Or does your Shield of Faith have the look of a shield from outward appearance, but it is paper thin and cannot withstand against even the first attack of the enemy?

How can we build our Shield of Faith stronger so that we can block off the fiery darts and flaming arrows from satan against us? I find three very important Shield building methods. We need all three, not just one.

### **1) Through the Bible, the Word of God**

Great evangelist of yesteryear D.L. Moody once said, "The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible." While we read, study, and memorize the verses from the Word of God, we learn to put more faith in our Lord God.

By the way, have you ever noticed that you can open the newspaper and maintain your full ability to concentrate with no distractions, even your kids are quiet? You may watch some mindless dumb TV programs and you'll get through it with no phone calls, no distractions, and no problems.

But, the moment you pull out the Bible, the flaming arrows start flying. It might be inability to concentrate. It might be a hundred and one things you should be doing that come to mind. They aren't necessarily evil thoughts, just, "Oh boy! I forgot to go do this; I've got to pick up the clothing from the cleaner; I've got to... etc., etc." All these thoughts are arrows, and they are nothing less than an onslaught to get you away from the Word.

Please don't think that when you have some time, you will read the Bible. Guess what? It will never happen in a million years. You MAKE your time with God through His Word, the Bible everyday.

If you've been coming to our church for a few weeks or months, you've noticed that we put a lot of emphases on the Word of God, not on experiences or emotions during the church services. Why? It is because our experiences and emotions can be altered or fabricated. But the Word of God is true and doesn't change. It is trustworthy.

## 2) Through prayers

Since we are going to study about the topic of prayer more in-depth in a few weeks, we will touch this briefly.

Your prayer to the Lord is your hotline to Him. There is no formula or spell that makes God listen to you more. But there are two things you must consider in your prayers:

- **Pray for God's will:** We don't have the whole picture of our difficult situations. But God does. You and I cannot go wrong by asking Him for His will be done instead of our own requests.

*1 John 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.*

I've heard that some Word of Faith movement teachers falsely tell their congregation that they shouldn't pray for God's will. What an audacity, ignorance, and blasphemy that is! The Father knows best, amen?

- **Don't pray with your selfish reason:** You certainly can have your own desires, but don't let those things to be the focal point of your prayers.

*James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Again, satan will do anything to stop you from praying. You pray to the Lord for His will in your life everyday.

## 3) Through church fellowship

*Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the*

*manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Some people say, "I don't have to go to church to believe in God." That is true. But if that person truly believes in God, he or she would do what the Lord told us to do. In most cases, not attending the church services regularly is nothing more than an excuse to be disobedient to the Lord's command and thinking oneself better than others which is pride and a sin itself.

What kinds of things happen at your home when you are getting ready to go to church? I don't think that we have enough time to list everything that goes wrong. I believe that the Murphy's Law steps in. Anything can go wrong will go wrong, right?

For ladies, you have absolutely nothing to wear even though you stand in front of the closet full of clothes. Your hair and makeup don't go the way you want; earrings don't go in, too many things go wrong. For guys, your car's battery is dead or a tire is flat; you cannot find your Bible; your kids irritate you, so you yell at them and they cry, then, your wife gives you that look A GAIN, on and on.

Do you feel the fiery darts and flaming arrows from satan just about every Sunday morning? So, should you stay home and veg out? That is exactly what satan wants you to do. Don't let him have the pleasure of taking you out of the church fellowship and worshipping the Lord with His people.

One more thing, I told you that the Roman soldiers' shields could be linked together. When you attend church services and have fellowship with other believers in Christ, you are linking up your Shield of Faith with them against satanic fiery darts and flaming arrows that come at you.

#### **D. I TRUST GOD, BUT THE SITUATION GETS WORSE. NOW WHAT?**

Loving our God is easy when He grants our requests and provides what we desire. Loving Him in difficult circumstances tests our faith. What if you prayed for God's will in your already difficult situation, but not very long after the prayer, the situation got worse. Now what? Did our faithful God drop His ball on you for the first time in the history of the universe? NEVER.

In Daniel 3, we read of the life-and-death decision Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had to make. If they chose to worship the golden image, they would live; if they refused, death was certain. They answered King Nebuchadnezzar:

*Daniel 3:17-18 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.*

Were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego lacking in faith when they said "but if not"? No. They knew God was fully capable of delivering them from the fiery furnace.

There's a lesson in this for all of us. Is God all-powerful? Yes. Is He able to deliver us from all of our problems? Yes. Does God always deliver us from our difficulties? No. But we still trust Him even to our death.

In case you think that death on earth is the end for the believers of Christ, you are absolutely wrong. It is only the beginning of the world we have not seen, so much better than the earth.

*1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

I did a memorial service for one of our congregation, Sherman Moore last Monday . It was a beautiful service, because the Lord Jesus was lifted up and the hope and assurance of Sherman's arrival to heaven were given to the family through the Holy Spirit.

We may not fully comprehend God's purpose in our difficulty and suffering , but we must not cease to love Him. We must trust Him and hope in Him in spite of the trials that threaten to overwhelm us.

I will take the worst day in heaven over the best day on earth any time, won 't you?

### ***E. A FEW PRINCIPLES OF FAITH TO REMEMBER***

- 1) Faith looks beyond circumstances, beyond our ups and downs, beyond feelings. Faith looks at what God can do.
- 2) Faith is believing that God not only CAN do it, but that God WILL do it!
- 3) Keep your Shield of Faith up, for the continuing attacks of satan are aiming at you.