

Sunday April 2nd, 2006

Spiritual Warfare Series part 8

The Shield of Faith

1). Eph 6:10 ¶ *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-*

2). In our foundational scripture from Ephesians we have seen that our warfare is against the first, or chief rulers who are a delegated authority, higher than man but lower than God. They are the Lords of this world, the princes of this age whose purposes and desires are evil, who have produced blindness in a metaphorical sense, so that Christians would not see the divine purposes of God.

a). Exactly what we see in - 2Co 4:3 *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

b). And we see here, referring to these same rulers, particularly their leader, who the Holy Spirit through Paul calls, 'the god of this age'.

c). And we would also note that he has blinded the eyes of those who are perishing, to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, not the gospel of grace.

d). And do you remember what it was that the disciples on the road to Emaus had failed to see, because of this very same blindness, that had brought a rebuke from the newly risen Savior? - Lu 24:25 *Then He said to*

them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"

e). What had been written about entering into His glory is the message surrounding the coming of His Kingdom. The establishment of a new order of rulers – Christ and His coheirs, removing and replacing the original rulers in the age to come. God’s eternal plan from before the foundation of the world - Col 1:16 *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*

f). Heb 2:5 ¶ *For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.*

3). So we would realize then, that as our spiritual armor is to protect us from the wiles of the devil – the systematic plans and schemes of Satan and the rest of the original rulers whose purpose is to overthrow those who would be coheirs with Christ. And that part of that armor is The Shield of Faith. We would of necessity have to conclude that the faith spoken of in respect of the shield is faith connected with God’s eternal plan of reconciliation that we saw in our Colossians scripture.

a). In other words it is faith in respect of the gospel of the glory of Christ, that which we have come to call the Word of the Kingdom.

4). This week we come to the next piece of our armor the shield of faith.

a). We note from our foundation scripture in Ephesians that we are to take the shield of faith, ‘above all’ – this then is the primary means of our defense.

b). And as we consider the interdependent function of our armor as we spoke of last week, and the fact that all the pieces work together concurrently, it should really be an obvious fact for us that faith is central to our protection from the enemy, as it is central to our journey to the goal of our calling to be a coheir with Christ. Both our protection and achieving our goal would involve one and the same thing – faith.

c). Heb 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

d). 1Jo 5:4 *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.*

e). 1Pe 1:9 *receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

5). Now faith seems to have become a somewhat complex issue within Christendom, primarily because it is misunderstood.

a). Quite simply faith is believing what God has said about an issue. And then that belief/faith is brought to its goal by aligning our lives in accordance with that which God has said. It is what we would call faithful obedience.

b). Now we must have settled in our minds that faith does not exist apart from the word of God

c). Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by (through) hearing, and hearing by the word of God*

d). This verse of scripture is a self-evident truth. It tells us that faith is something that comes as a result of us hearing/receiving the word of God.

e). The question is, 'Do we believe that?' – If so the word has proved itself to be true. If we do not believe it, it does not invalidate the truth of the word, but rather shows that we have refused to believe what God has said.

f). And we should also note that with regards to the dispensation of the church, God makes it plain to us that He speaks to us through His word.

g). Heb 1:1 ¶ *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

h). We will remember - Joh 1:1 ¶ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

i/ The Word that became flesh

i). And remember what Jesus, Himself spoke on the day of His resurrection that opened the eyes of those blinded disciples on the road to Emmaus to understand scripture - Lu 24:27 *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

And this would quite obviously deal with past, present and future revelation, concerning His past, present and future ministries. As we have already seen, 'that Christ must first suffer these things and then enter into His glory'.

i/ And it is particularly encouraging for us to know that 2Pe 1:20 *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,*

ii/ It is rather scripture that interprets itself - 1Co 2:13 *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

j). To have the shield of faith we must have the word of God, and specifically that Word which deals with God's eternal plans to reconcile all things in Christ, and remember our foundation scripture admonishes us to have this, 'above all'.

k). In fact as we come to study God's word we realize that the gospel of the glory of Christ is not a facet of the word, it is the word. We see it from the opening verses of Genesis to the conclusion of the matter in Revelation.

l). And everything in between moves inexorably towards this end.

6). Now we have noted that an understanding of the word of the kingdom IS spiritual maturity and that we need a degree of maturity to be able to put on the armor.

a). Recall for a moment what we read in Isaiah - Isa 28:9 ¶ *"Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? 10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little."*

7). A correct engagement with the word of God is then of paramount importance for us. And this is our own individual responsibility.

a). The word is being taught here this morning, but it is our own individual responsibility to have ears to hear in order to receive the word.

b). I preach to myself on Sunday morning also, and I have a responsibility to hear what is being said - Jas 1:21 *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

8). Do we believe and receive from the word that having the shield of faith will quench ALL the fiery darts of the wicked one? If we do and if we act upon it this word is able to save our souls.

b). Whatever missile the god of this world would throw at us in an attempt to cause us to burn will be extinguished.

c). He might want to ignite the flames of Gehenna in our lives, but the word of God as the Shield of Faith is our flame proof protection.

d). There was a fiery dart shot into the camp of Israel at Kadesh Barnea and two million people were ignited by it, but our good friends Caleb and Joshua had the shield of faith - Nu 32:11 *'Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me, 12 'except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD.'*

e). Here then is the Shield of Faith in action – Caleb and Joshua wholly followed the Lord in everything He had said, and what He had said had to do with the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, an inheritance in that land and the establishment of the theocracy.

f). That shield of faith protected them even in the midst of two million Orpahs. And that protection saw them alone of the first generation of Israel entering the land and receiving what God had promised.

g). It is the Shield of Faith that we see in Ruth - Ru 3:5 *And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do."*

h). And the conclusion of the matter for Ruth is marriage to the kinsman redeemer.

i). And again the Shield of Faith in - Heb 11:32 ¶ *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.*

9). Let me encourage us today to take up that Shield of Faith, in conjunction with the rest of the armor, knowing that with this properly in place we can

stand firm, we can be strong in the Lord and the Power of His might. We can have victory over the enemy of our souls. We can win the prize and receive the reward of the inheritance.

a). Remember what we have just read in Hebrews 11 and look what God says about that in respect of us - Heb 12:1 ¶ *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

b). This great cloud of witnesses are the proof that this fight can be won. And these were men and women of flesh and blood and temptation and foolishness and failure, just like us. Yet they kept the shield of faith in place, not letting go of the promises God had made concerning that city with foundations whose builder and maker is God.

10). Remember - Ro 4:13 *For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

a). Ga 3:29 *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

b). Ro 8:17 ¶ *and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

c). Christ suffered in the death of His flesh and so must we also. Our enemy will throw darts of deception to deceive us into keeping our flesh alive. He would like nothing better than to see us sow to the flesh and find ourselves in the garbage dump outside the city instead of sitting on the throne with Christ. Knowing what God's word says, believing it and acting on it is our total protection from this.

d). Let us determine to be able to say with Paul - 2Ti 4:7 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

11). As we take the Lord's Supper together today let us determine to take up the shield of faith.

a). Elders and wives to pray.