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GUARD YOUR FAITH

“...in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,” (Eph. 6:16). Shields were extremely vital to the survival of Roman soldiers in combat and several different kinds were used. One was a small, round shield that was secured to the soldier’s arm by leather straps. This shield was to block and push away the thrusts of an enemy blade in hand-to-hand combat. This small, lightweight shield is not the one referred to here. The word Paul uses here is “thureos” which comes from the word “thura” meaning “door”. This larger, door-shaped shield which was designed to cover the entire body of the soldier is the shield Paul references. A man could put his entire body behind it as it absorbed the javelins and arrows of the enemy. The tips

of arrows would be wrapped in pieces of cloth that had been soaked in pitch. This would then be set on fire and shot at the enemy. When the arrow hit its target, the flaming pitch would splatter in every direction, igniting everything flammable it touched. The Roman “thureos” shield would provide an adequate defense against these fiery missiles. If the shield was covered with metal, the arrow and its fiery tip would be deflected. If the shield was covered with leather, it would be soaked in water prior to the battle, and the wet leather would quench the fiery arrows and protect the soldier behind the shield. Often, the arrow would snuff out as it buried itself in the thickness of the shield, and in the midst of battle, these shields would bristle with smoking arrows like porcupines. Paul reminds us of

the great all encompassing shield we may hide ourselves behind when Satan's fiery arrows of temptation are fired upon us. This shield Paul describes is faith. The great danger Satan ultimately brings upon us with every temptation is the attempt to deceive us with the belief that there is more joy and lasting fulfillment in sinful pleasures than there is in obedience to God's word. This is a devastating lie in that the exact opposite nearly always occurs when we give in and indulge the lusts of the flesh. While they may have the allurements of possessing a moment of enjoyable pleasure, they are set on fire with the ability to actually consume and destroy anything resembling lasting joy, fulfillment or peace. God has given us His word to resist the tempting deceptive lies Satan brings upon us in an effort to convince us to indulge the flesh in sinful pleasure. *"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it,"* (1 Cor. 10:13). While we must hide behind the shield of our trust in the truth of God's word to

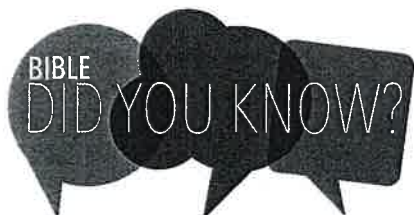
protect us from temptation and resist indulgence with obedience to God's truth, there is something else about His word we must have faith in which is what ultimately quenches the dangerous flaming arrows of temptation. We must believe and have full trust and faith that obedience to God's word is what ultimately leads to complete joy, fulfillment and peace, even though it may not always result in immediate enjoyment the way sinful pleasure nearly always promises. In this way, obedience to the Spirit and obedience to the flesh are total opposites. While obedience to the lust of the flesh almost always promises immediate gratification while at the same time offering nothing in the realm of lasting joy, fulfillment or peace, obedience to the Spirit offers 100% guaranteed promises of lasting joy, fulfillment and peace while promising nothing in the realm of immediate pleasure. In fact most of the time it involves some degree of discomfort or pain either through the struggles of self-disciplined resistance or the pain inflicted from various degrees of outside persecution as a reaction to our choice of obedience. This is the shield we must put our trust in and hide

ourselves behind when the flaming arrows of temptation are fired upon us, that obedience to the Spirit through the Word of God is what will result in lasting joy, fulfillment and peace while giving in to momentary pleasurable sin will only rob, kill and destroy the possibility of attaining those.

"For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," (2 Cor. 4:17-18). "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar," (Prov. 30:5-6). "As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the LORD is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him," (Ps. 18:30). "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith," (1 Jn. 5:4). Don't let Satan's deceptive lies that indulging the flesh with immediate gratifying sinful pleasure will bring long lasting satisfaction ignite the flesh and stir up those desires. Quench those flaming arrows with the

confident trust that it is obedience to the Spirit that ultimately brings what sin can never accomplish even though it deceptively promises. *"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ," (1 Pet. 1:6-7).*

– Daniel Ruegg



Suffering unjustly for your faith in Christ brings glory to God. "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name."

1 Pet. 4:14-16



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Full Pew Challenge

Jn. 1:39 "He said to them, 'Come, and you will see.' So they came and saw where He was staying; and they both stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour."

Inviting others to be around Jesus to learn and experience for themselves what He and His message was all about is exactly how Jesus Himself found His first curious followers. Our gospel meeting with Luther Pratt this month will provide a full week of opportunities for anyone to come see and hear for themselves what our hope and faith in Christ is all about. The challenge for this month is two parted: 1) How many people would it take to fill up the entire pew where you currently sit? If we made a goal for each pew where a current member of the congregation sits to be filled with visitors, how many people should each member be inviting? If 5 or 6 more people would fill up the pew where you sit, just count on needing to invite well over twice as many to reach the goal. 2) Set a follow up visit to study with anyone who accepts your invitation. Let's Go!

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Revelation 21:1-8

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.' And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And He said, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true.' Then He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."