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RACIAL ISSUES AND THE BIBLE

“...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

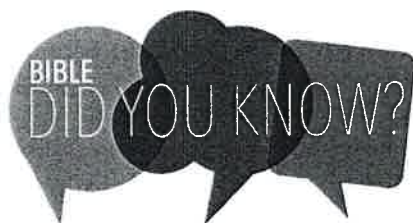
obedience to God's truth, there is something else about His word we must have faith in which is what ultimately quenches the dangerous flaming arrows of temptation. We must believe and have full trust and faith that obedience to God's word is what ultimately leads to complete joy, fulfillment and peace, 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



"He who gives attention to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD. The wise in heart will be called understanding, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.

Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, but the discipline of fools is folly. The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." Prov. 16:20-25

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



Possible Site of Trial of Jesus Discovered

It started 15 years ago with plans to expand the Tower of David Museum. But the story took a strange turn when archaeologists started peeling away layers under the floor in an old abandoned building adjacent to the museum in Jerusalem's Old City. They knew it had been used as a prison when the Ottoman Turks and then the British ruled these parts. But, as they carefully dug down, they eventually uncovered something extraordinary: the suspected remains of the palace where one of the more famous scenes of the New Testament may have taken place — the trial of Jesus. Now, after years of excavation and a further delay caused by wars and a lack of funds, the archaeologists' precious find is being shown to the public through tours organized by the museum. The prison "is a great part of the ancient puzzle of Jerusalem and shows the history of this city in a very unique and clear way," said Amit Re'em, the Jerusalem district archaeologist, who headed the excavation team more than a decade ago. For Re'em, the building has yielded a trove of thrilling discoveries from across the centuries — symbols etched into old jail walls by prisoners from the Jewish resistance fighting to create the state of Israel in the 1940s, fabric-dyeing basins from the era of the Crusades and the foundation walls and an underground sewage system that probably underpinned the sprawling palace built by Herod the Great, the eccentric king of Judea under the Roman empire. But for the more than 1 million Christian pilgrims who visit Jerusalem each year, the site is especially significant because it could have been an important place in the life of Jesus. "For those Christians who care about accuracy in regards to historical facts, this is very forceful," said Yisca Harani, an expert on Christianity and pilgrimage to the Holy Land. "For others, however, those who come for the general mental exercise of being in Jerusalem, they don't care as long as [their journey] ends in Golgotha — the site of the Crucifixion." Today, many Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem walk the Stations of the Cross, or Via Dolorosa, taking them from where it is believed Roman Procurator Pontius Pilate held the trial and sentence Jesus to death, to where Jesus was eventually crucified and buried. Harani said that since pilgrims started making their way to Jerusalem centuries ago, the route of the Via Dolorosa has changed several times, depending on who ruled the city at the time and what they deemed important. In the Byzantine period, for example, the Via Dolorosa began closer to the area where the museum now sits in the western part of the city. It was only after the 13th century that the starting point moved to the Antonia Fortress, the site of a former Roman military barracks which today sits beneath a school close to the al-Aqsa mosque.

