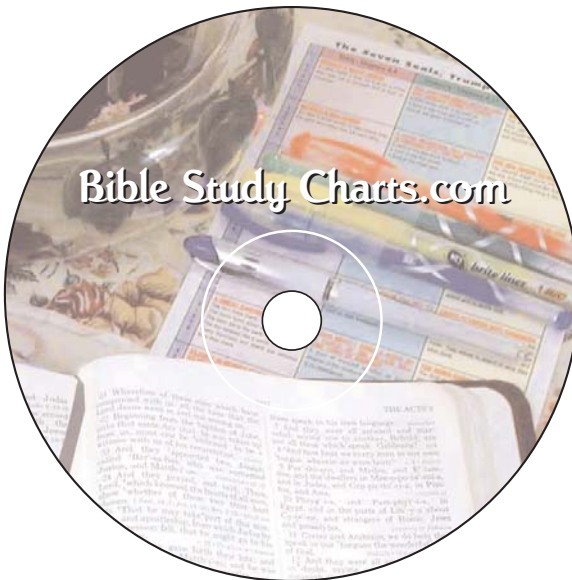


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The Shield of Faith

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH.

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Ephesians 6:16

The shield of faith is a vital part of the Christian's armor. You are to put on the whole armor of God, because the Christian life is a warfare, a spiritual conflict.

The importance of faith is seen in that:

1. You cannot be saved without faith (John 3:36).
2. You cannot live victoriously over the world without faith (1 John 5:4).
3. You cannot please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6).
4. You cannot pray without faith (James 1:6).
5. You cannot have peace with God without faith (Romans 5:1).
6. You cannot have joy without faith (1 Peter 1:8).
7. You are justified by faith and not by works (Galatians. 2:16).
8. You are to live by faith (Galatians. 2:20).
9. You are made righteous by faith (Romans 10:1-4).
10. Christ dwells in your heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17).
11. The Holy Spirit is received by faith (Galatians 3:2).
12. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

Faith is so important because it honors God, and God always honors faith.

II. WHAT IS FAITH?

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

Your faith is your title deed to eternal life. Just as a title deed is evidence of real estate, so your faith is evidence of your eternal estate in God.

1. Faith is taking God at His Word (Hebrews. 11:6).
2. Faith is knowing that "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28).
3. Faith has two sides. One side has to do with the intellect - an intellectual conviction that Jesus Christ is God. The other side has to do with the will - a voluntary surrender to Him as Lord (Master) of your life.
4. Faith is paradoxical. It goes beyond reason. It believes without understanding "why." It sings in prison (Acts 16:25). It glorifies in tribulation (Romans 5:3). It chooses to suffer (Hebrews 11:25). It accepts all things as a part of God's will (Romans 8:28).

You are not born with this faith. It comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). This is why we are commanded to preach the gospel to every creature, that they may hear and believe (Romans 10:13,14).

III. LITTLE FAITH.

...O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Matthew 14:33

At this stage in Peter's life, he was a man of little faith. However, after Pentecost, he became a spiritual giant. Jesus came to His distressed disciples, walking on the water in the midst of the storm. Peter asked to come to Jesus on the water. He must have been thrilled at the thought of doing the impossible. Jesus said, "Come."

1. Peter walked on the water, by faith.
2. Peter saw the storm, and had a second thought - he doubted, and for a moment, he lost sight of Jesus.

III. LITTLE FAITH CONTINUED.

3. Peter feared destruction. Doubt always breeds fear.
4. Peter began to sink - he failed.
5. Peter prayed "Lord save me." Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him.
6. Again Peter walked on the water with Jesus, to the boat.

You need a faith that is bigger than the elements that would drag you down to defeat. You can have big faith by "Prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:20,21) and by feeding your faith on the Word of God (Romans 10:17). You can have mountain-moving faith.

IV. THREE KINDS OF FAITH.

Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.....
John 11:21-46

In these verses, we see the faith of Martha in connection with the resurrection of her brother Lazarus.

1. Martha's faith was limited. The death of Lazarus meant the end of Martha's faith. She believed that Jesus had the power to raise her brother up from the sick bed, but not from the dead (verse 21). Limited faith is controlled by circumstances, and motivated by fear of failure.
2. Martha's faith was fundamental. Jesus said, "Thy brother shall rise again" (verse 23). These words were spoken to kindle hope and faith in Martha; but she said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (verse 24). Martha declared the fundamental faith in a great truth, but that is not enough. She had limited faith in the power of Christ (Mark 10:27).
3. At last, unlimited faith came to Martha when she consented to have the stone moved from the grave (verse 41). When Jesus first ordered the stone taken from the grave, Martha objected in unbelief (verse 39). Then Jesus, challenging her to believe, said, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" (verse 40). Martha believed and waited to see the glory of God, and she was not disappointed.

Don't be satisfied with limited, fundamental faith only, when you can have unlimited faith that pleases God and reveals His glory.

V. THE HALL OF FAITH - HEBREWS CHAPTER ELEVEN

Hebrews Chapter 11 is often called the "Hall of Faith" chapter. You need to come here often and linger long, that your faith may become strong in the Lord, for in Scripture we get a view of the history of Israel and the church, as it is written by faith....*And these all, having obtained a good report through faith.* Hebrews 11:32-39

They worshiped by faith as Abel. They walked by faith as Enoch. They worked by faith as Noah. They lived by faith as Abraham. They followed by faith as Israel. They fought by faith as Joshua. They conquered by faith as Gideon. They subdued kingdoms by faith as David. They closed the mouths of lions by faith as Daniel. They walked through the fire as the Three Hebrew Children. They suffered by faith as Paul. They died by faith as Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:54-60).

By faith they were patient in suffering, courageous in battle, made strong out of weakness, and were victorious in defeat. They were more than conquerors by faith. It is only by faith in the all-powerful Christ that you can be superior to circumstances, and victorious over all the evil forces that would destroy you. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews. 12:2). The faith of the saints inspires us, but we look to Jesus as our example of faith.