

Lesson Eight – The Shield of Faith

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We now come to the piece of armor called the “shield of faith.” At this point in the study, we will be doing a lot of review of past lessons and connecting-the-dots. We’ve already covered a lot of material so far concerning faith as it applies to this aspect of our battle gear; in this lesson, we will try to understand it a bit more and fill in a few gaps.

You should know by now that faith simply means belief, and more specifically, faith *as God sees it* is belief in Him and what He has said.

Romans 10:17

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Now some people may claim to have an abundance of faith, but have no knowledge of God’s Word other than knowing that Jesus died for their sins. Can that be so? Every Christian possessed a basic faith when they accepted the free gift, which resulted in them receiving everlasting life. However, as we have studied, that initial faith is not enough to save them in that *future day*. The faith that one needs after being born again is an active faith, a faith that combines with works, which results in the salvation of the soul. And according to our Romans passage, faith cannot exist apart from the Word. Therefore, the motivating question for all of God’s children should be, “If you don’t know *what* God has said, how can you have and *put into action* the kind of faith that pleases God?”

Think about it, and study well this week.

Day One – Being Taught

A very important part of your study time is the time you spend in prayer to God. Please do not skip this in an effort to “just get the lesson done.” It is time well spent and you will receive much from your efforts. God loves to hear the prayers of His people!

As a student of Scripture (which every Christian should be), you should be reading God's Word and constantly making connections, asking questions, seeing subtle revelations as well as obvious ones, *asking questions*, all the while checking context and content. It sounds complicated, but it isn't (time consuming, yes, but very available and possible to the average, non-seminary-trained layperson). In order to *un-complicate* this and put the focus where it should be, let's step back for a moment and contemplate the real issue at hand, which is—

John 16:13-15

¹³ “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you.”

Where will the Spirit guide you?

What will He disclose to you (v. 14)?

What else will He disclose to you (v. 15)?

The Spirit speaks what He hears—

I Corinthians 2:9-12

⁹ ...but just as it is written, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.” ¹⁰ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God...

Verse 10 states that God “revealed them” to us, through the Spirit. What did God reveal?

How can the Spirit do this (vv. 10b and 11b)?

And just a few verses later we read—

I Corinthians 2:16

For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

What do we have?

(Note: You and I, as present-day Christians, can *in many cases* use the “we” in the epistles to apply to us. All the epistles, from Romans to Jude, were written to churches and hence were written to saved individuals. The topic of each epistle is the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to God’s people—the very same thing being offered to us today. Sometimes, however, the context reveals a specific trait that the writer and the recipient share, such as faithfulness, that you and I and other members of the Body may or may not share. Needless to say, we would then need to check the Word, as well as ourselves, to see if it is applicable.)

According to the preceding verses, can you and I know and understand what God’s Word says and means? In other words, can any Christian know the truth of God’s Word?

God’s Word says we can! Do you believe—*have faith in*—that? Do you believe that the Holy Spirit will teach you? Apart from the Spirit, you cannot learn the *deep things of God*. If you have felt (or still feel) overwhelmed at the enormity of what you *don’t* know, stop it. Stop worrying about not knowing enough and not having a good grasp and recall of Scripture; just follow the Spirit, get into God’s Word and be obedient, and He will teach and He will lead. It is simply a matter of choice!

As I’ve said repeatedly, you need to know what you believe. You need to know God’s Word. Some people need to read a passage over and over before they can remember it, others may need to *hear* it over and over before they can recall it from. And occasionally, others cannot seem to make the Scriptures stick in their head no matter what they try. That can be discouraging, can’t it? But be encouraged, because God wants you to learn and He wants you to share the message, and He wants you to know His Word. It may take you longer than it takes your friend, and you may not have as much time as the next guy to devote to studying the Word. Do not forget that each one of us is a unique individual that God needs to mold and shape and refine—and what works on one person may not work on another, and God knows this! Just submit yourself and your time to Him, remain faithfully obedient, and He will ready you for the work He has planned for you.

There is, however, a commonality in the way God teaches the truth of His Word—

Isaiah 28:9-13

⁹ “To whom would He teach knowledge? And to whom would He interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just taken from the breast? ¹⁰ For He says, ‘Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there.’” ¹¹ Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, ¹² He who said to them, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,” and, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen. ¹³ So the word of the Lord to them will be, “Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there,” that they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken captive. ¹⁴ Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, O scoffers...

To truly understand what is happening here in Isaiah, you need to read the entire chapter, plus the preceding and following chapters. Keep in mind that Isaiah, a prophet of the Lord, is ministering to the Nation of Israel at a time when the nation has been divided into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. Isaiah proclaims his message of repentance first to the Northern Kingdom of Israel just prior to it being conquered by the Assyrians, and then he turns his attention to the Southern Kingdom of Judah with warnings of the same nature. Essentially his message to the people of God is the same—repent from sinful behavior and turn their attention back to the Lord. Isaiah gives strong warnings about the judgments to come regarding Israel’s ungodly behavior. Isaiah does give hope to the nation, however, and makes many prophecies regarding the coming Messiah and His bringing salvation. Isaiah chapter 28 is a warning to the

priests and prophets of Israel who were engaging in unrighteous behavior and leading the people in the same manner.

Please read Isaiah chapter 28 now.

Now read this passage again—

Isaiah 28:9-13

⁹ “To whom would He teach knowledge? And to whom would He interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just taken from the breast? ¹⁰ For He says, ‘Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there.’” ¹¹ Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, ¹² He who said to them, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,” and, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen. ¹³ So the word of the Lord to them will be, “Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there,” that they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken captive. ¹⁴ Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, O scoffers, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem.

According to vv. 9-10, God teaches and interprets the message in the following manner:

- Order upon order (Lit., commandment upon the commandment)
- Line upon line (Lit., connecting cord upon the connecting cord)
- A little here (Lit., a small bit here)
- A little there (Lit., a small bit there)

Before we go any further, it is important to note that the punctuation marks you see—quotation marks, question marks, periods, and commas—WERE NOT in the original language. The writers of ancient Hebrew did not use punctuation marks. Instead, they had ways of ordering words or using interrogative words to indicate, for example, when a question was being asked or when a new sentence was beginning. The language also consisted of marks on the letters of the words themselves to indicate meaning and emphasis. I do not claim to have any (near to NONE) knowledge of ancient Hebrew. I do however have some knowledge of English grammar and am able to read materials that others have written regarding the original text. Albeit the reliance is on man’s words when it comes to this area, but if you take such investigation and use it as a tool for dissecting the translations of the languages, you may end up with a bit more answer than you have question. Then let the Lord build on that with other Scriptures, which will indeed give you commentary on what it is you are seeking. (Sometimes this takes setting aside a particular thought or verse for a while until you come upon another verse or section that supports or explains it.)

So having said this, let’s look at Isaiah 28:9 as the Hebrew interlinear has it—

Whom? he shall direct knowledge and whom? he shall explain report ones being weaned from milk ones being pulled away from breasts

Literally it should read—

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? [them that are] weaned from the milk, [and] drawn from the breasts.

According to the literal translation of this verse, to whom will God teach knowledge and whom will he make to understand doctrine?

Understanding Spiritual Warfare— Standing Firm in the Battle

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Do you remember what we studied about *milk* in Lesson Four (p. 81)? What does Heb. 5:12-13 say about the milk and those who partake of it only?

Do you see a connection to what Isaiah is saying? What is it?

God teaches in this manner to those *ready* and *willing* to do what it takes to mature.

Going back to the passage in Isaiah, there's another aspect to the manner in which God teaches in the way of, "line upon line, order on order, a little here and a little there." We can also learn *why* He teaches in this way.

Who is the "them" in v. 12? (You will need to read Is. 1-11 to answer this.)

What did God say that they would not listen to (v. 12)?

What do you know about the "rest" that God spoke about?

And because they would not listen, how will God speak to them (v. 13)?

Why will God speak to them this way (v. 13b)?

What will He use to speak to them (v. 11)?

Verse 14 begins with "therefore," so make sure you check the context to see what it is connecting. Isaiah tells the "scoffers" to listen to the Word of the Lord. The scoffers are the ones ruling "this people who are in Jerusalem," and "this people" are the ones who would not listen to God's invitation to "rest." Let's continue reading the passage—

Isaiah 28:14-16

¹⁴ Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, O scoffers, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, ¹⁵ because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have made a pact. The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by, for we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception." ¹⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a costly cornerstone

for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed. ¹⁷ And I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the level...”

What do these scoffers say?

What does the Lord say back to them (v. 16)?

Now, doing just what this passage says to do (line upon line, a little here and little there), compare the scoffers in Isaiah to the scoffers mentioned in Peter’s second epistle. Notice that in both cases it is scoffing in relation to future judgment and the people’s response to what the Word of the Lord says—

II Peter 3:2-10

² ...that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. ³ Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers (KJV uses the word “scoffers”) will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” ⁵ For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, ⁶ through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. ⁷ But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. ⁸ But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

This passage speaks for itself, doesn’t it? The scoffing is in relation to the Day of the Lord—the Seventh Day Rest. Exactly what Isaiah speaks about.

Any thoughts?

Good job today. Stay diligent in your prayer time, and we’ll start again tomorrow.

Day Two – Above All

Pray before you begin.

Read again Paul’s words to the church at Ephesus—

Ephesians 6:10-17

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of this wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Drawing from what you learned in Lesson Four of this study, what does Paul mean by beginning this thought with the word, “Finally”?

Why do we need to stand against the schemes of the devil? Why do we struggle against these spiritual forces in the heavenly places?

Paul states in v. 13, “Therefore” we are to take up the full armor and stand firm. “Therefore” is a connecting word to say “because of this which I just said...” Connect v. 13 with v. 12, and sum up what this passage means (again, this is “line upon line, a little here and a little there!”).

Then we get to v. 16, our verse for this lesson—

“... in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.

The King James Version has this verse translated—

Ephesians 6:16

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

What does “above all” mean in this verse?

How important is the shield of faith?

Would this shield be referencing the faith necessary to bring about spiritual birth, or the faith necessary to save the soul? Or both? How do you know?

Paul is talking about the faith necessary to *save the soul* (the faith that James says must be accompanied by works), because this whole passage in Ephesians is directed to the one who is already spiritually alive. That initial saving faith is no longer an issue, nor could it be considered a part of the armor since the armor is to be worn by one who is pressing on toward maturity. Do you see that? (If you are struggling on this point, go back and work through Day One of Lesson Six and Day One of Lesson Seven.)

As we've studied, faith must be at the heart of all that we do.

Hebrews 11:6

And 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 seek Him.

Can we please God without faith?

Remember the sure-footed stance we must have when wearing the armor? It is our foundation, it is how we *stand firm*. Read what Hebrews says about our foundation—

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

The word “assurance” is the Greek noun *hupostasis* (5287), which literally means a “stand under”—something used as a foundation or basis. This is actually a derivative of the word *histemi* (2476) which means “stand” and is found in Ephesians 6:11,13, and 14.

Using this definition, rewrite Hebrews 11:1.

What is it that we hope for?

Contextually speaking, what faith is this referring to? Read the verse that precedes Hebrews 11:1—

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Hebrews 10:39-11:1

³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving [Lit., saving] of the soul. ¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Is the faith that leads to the saving of the soul an active faith, or a passive faith? What does that mean?

According to Ephesians 6:16, this faith will “extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.” Would that be *some* of the flaming missiles, or ALL of the flaming missiles?

The phrase “flaming missiles” in the original Greek is actually, literally, exactly what it says—“fiery or burning darts or missiles.” Since the evil one doesn’t throw tangible, literal projectiles at us, we must take this to mean a figurative “flaming missile” (and since the whole of the armor is figurative and not literal, this would just make sense).

The phrase “evil one” is the Greek word *poneros*, which means “wicked” or “evil.” It is in the form of an adjectival noun, so the actual rendering of the word is “evil one.” However, we are unable to tell if Paul meant The Evil One (Satan), or a person who is evil. It doesn’t really matter, because Scripture teaches us that Satan is the author and manipulator of all that is evil.

What do you think Paul is referring to when he says “flaming missiles” of the “evil one”?

Since this is a personal battle, and Satan is determined to see you be overcome and defeated and on the wrong side of the goal of your calling, how do you see that Satan will attempt to keep *you* from reaching the goal?

How will *the shield of faith* keep you from being overcome and defeated?

We’ll end here for today. As I said, much of this Lesson is review, and now it is time to pull the many pieces together and get a more comprehensive understanding of the battle we are engaged in.

See you tomorrow.

Day Three – God’s Perfect Plan

Pray first.

Faith/belief must be according to what God has said; therefore, faith is specific. Faith must be in relation to that which is revealed in God’s Word—who God is and what God has done, is doing, and will do; otherwise, *it is not the kind of faith that pleases Him*.

We’ve explored a bit about the mystery of the Gentiles; their part in God’s plan of reconciliation and how the mystery was hidden until it could be understood through the events of the Cross and Resurrection. One important thing to note about this revelation of God’s plan is that all things have occurred exactly as God designed them to occur; all things, from the beginning, have happened according to God’s intended plan. Never along the way did God change to “Plan B.”

Matthew 13:34-35

³⁴ All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable, ³⁵ so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world.”

Remember that the parables were specifically about the offer of the kingdom of the heavens. The things that Jesus speaks about concerning the kingdom were hidden *since the foundation of the world*. Is there any indication that God changed His mind about the kingdom at any point?

Read about the kingdom, and when it was prepared—

Matthew 25:34

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

When did God prepare the kingdom?

Read about God’s works, and when they were finished—

Hebrews 4:3

For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, “As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,” although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

When were God’s works finished?

Read about Jesus, and His origins—

I Peter 1:20-21

²⁰ For He [Jesus] was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

John 1:1-2,14

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

According to these verses, how long has Jesus been around?

When was Jesus slain?

When was His earthly body crucified?

Did God know it would happen?

Therefore, God's plan has never changed and what He said at the beginning in relation to man must still hold true—

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

This is the point to which all of God's Word moves—

Revelation 19:15 (This occurs in the Seventh Day, the Lord's Day, after the marriage of the Lamb)

And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron...

Revelation 2:26-27

²⁶ And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; ²⁷ AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father...

Do you believe that?

Then what you believe needs to be accompanied by obedience—works in accordance with your faith. It seems simple, and it *is* simple in concept:

- Know what God has said
- Believe what God has said
- Do what God has said

The hard part, of course, is actually doing it.

Sum up what you have learned so far about the shield of faith. How does it tie into the rest of the armor of God? Why is this particular piece considered “above all”?

Think and pray on these things. See you tomorrow.

Day Four – Unity of the Faith

I know that these lessons get a bit long. I know how difficult it is to find time to study. I know it is much easier just to listen to what other people say. *I know.*

I also know that God expects us to mature. I also know that maturity comes from the solid food of God’s Word. I also know that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God—you cannot mature without knowing what God says. I also know that maturity comes through suffering. Suffering comes from doing what is right. *Doing* what is right comes from *knowing* what is right. I know these things because God’s Word tells us these things.

I also know that Satan does not want you or me to know these things. But God does.

So, *please* stop right now and read the entire book of Ephesians. Keep in mind *everything* that you have learned up to this point and read it. But before you begin, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you. Ask for patience and ask for understanding. Ask for eyes to see and for ears to hear. Ask in faith and then *act* in faith. Remember, with God ALL things are possible.

Now, having read the entire Book of Ephesians (Good job!), let’s focus on one last thing.

Ephesians 4:1-16

¹ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.” ⁹ (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) ¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²

for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

According to v. 4, there is *one* body and *one* Spirit. What is the one body?

What is the *one* Spirit?

What is the *one* hope of your calling?

Notice that it is *one* hope of our calling; all Christians have the same calling.

Who is the *one* Lord in v. 5?

What is the *one* faith? (Yes, there is only *one* faith, and it is not simply the grace message.)

What is the *one* baptism?

And who is the *one* God and Father?

Do you see what Paul is getting at? There are not many right answers to these questions—in fact, there is only one correct answer for each, *just one*. The Church at Ephesus would not have had any problem answering these questions. Paul states the *one-ness* of their belief and therefore the *unity* of their belief. He told them to be diligent to preserve it.

Looking back to our Ephesians passage above—

From v. 11, name the ministries that Christ gave the Church.

Why were they given?

They need to do their work *until* we all attain to what (v. 13)?

Note the phrase, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith.” In the original Greek, the word *faith* in this verse has a definite article in front of it—“the.” In the Greek language the use of a definite article is different than in English. In English, it serves merely to particularize or to refer to a particular object. In Greek, however, it serves to **emphasize** the person or thing it is used with.

What is the *unity* of the *faith*? This would need to be seen as different from unity of faith. Let’s get familiar with Paul’s usage of the term, “the faith.”

I Timothy 3:9

...but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience...

From what you’ve learned so far, what is the mystery all about?

So we see that “the faith” is wrapped up in the mystery.

More from Paul—

Colossians 2:6-7

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

The Church at Colossae had “received Christ Jesus the Lord” and Paul now tells them to *walk in Him*. They were being built up in Him and were being established in “the faith.” This speaks of maturity and growth. What does maturity in the Christ entail?

Do you see what Paul means by *the* faith? It is the word of the kingdom, the gospel of glory, the hope of the Christian’s calling. It is all about the whole counsel of God—His perfect plan and His perfect will—everything contained within His Word pertaining to the gospel of grace *and* the gospel of glory.

If *unity of the faith* (those things having to do with the glory of Christ and the kingdom of heaven) is the goal, how is it achieved? The ministry mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 was given for this purpose—to equip the saints for service and maturity, so that they could all “attain to the unity of the faith AND of the knowledge (Lit. mature knowledge) of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

Is this unity of the faith at all speaking of general brotherly love? Look at the context in the Book of Ephesians. It’s about *maturity* of the faith, being no longer “children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine.” It’s about a like-minded Church, with *one* hope of their calling and *one* faith. The Church in Ephesus possessed a mature knowledge of the kingdom and how they were to get there. This unity does not speak of uniformity, conformity, or acceptance of each other’s differing views about the Christ and His kingdom. How can it?

What if one of them did not believe in the literal coming kingdom? Or, what if a group of them did not think they needed to be concerned about the kingdom? How can they grow up together in *the faith* and be united together in *the faith* if they all believe different things concerning what *the faith* has to do with?

Think about it.

Day Five – Encouragement from the Psalms

Begin with prayer.

I never used to like reading the Book of Psalms. I couldn’t connect with the poetic writings, nor understand what caused the writers of the Psalms to get so emotional (and lengthy!). Now that I see the “kindness and severity” of God (Rom. 11:22), and how it pertains to me *personally*, I have a much greater appreciation for the thankfulness and gratefulness—and *sorrow*—of each writer’s heart. So if you, too, have any hesitation to the Psalms in general, set that aside for now and read this portion of Psalm 119 with a new understanding; look at it through new eyes. Can you do that?

Psalm 119:1-48

- ¹ How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.
- ² How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart.
- ³ They also do no unrighteousness; they walk in His ways.
- ⁴ Thou hast ordained Thy precepts, that we should keep them diligently.
- ⁵ Oh that my ways may be established to keep Thy statutes!
- ⁶ Then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon all Thy commandments.
- ⁷ I shall give thanks to Thee with uprightness of heart, when I learn Thy righteous judgments.
- ⁸ I shall keep Thy statutes; do not forsake me utterly!
- ⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word.
- ¹⁰ With all my heart I have sought Thee; do not let me wander from Thy commandments.
- ¹¹ Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.
- ¹² Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy statutes.
- ¹³ With my lips I have told of all the ordinances of Thy mouth.
- ¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.
- ¹⁵ I will meditate on Thy precepts, and regard Thy ways.
- ¹⁶ I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word.
- ¹⁷ Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live and keep Thy word.
- ¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law.
- ¹⁹ I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide Thy commandments from me.
- ²⁰ My soul is crushed with longing after Thine ordinances at all times.

²¹ Thou dost rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, who wander from Thy commandments.
²² Take away reproach and contempt from me, for I observe Thy testimonies.
²³ Even though princes sit and talk against me, Thy servant meditates on Thy statutes.
²⁴ Thy testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors.
²⁵ My soul cleaves to the dust; revive me according to Thy word.
²⁶ I have told of my ways, and Thou hast answered me; teach me Thy statutes.
²⁷ Make me understand the way of Thy precepts, so I will meditate on Thy wonders.
²⁸ My soul weeps because of grief; strengthen me according to Thy word.
²⁹ Remove the false way from me, and graciously grant me Thy law.
³⁰ I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Thine ordinances before me.
³¹ I cleave to Thy testimonies; O Lord, do not put me to shame!
³² I shall run the way of Thy commandments, for Thou wilt enlarge my heart.
³³ Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall observe it to the end.
³⁴ Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law, and keep it with all my heart.
³⁵ Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, for I delight in it.
³⁶ Incline my heart to Thy testimonies, and not to dishonest gain.
³⁷ Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in Thy ways.
³⁸ Establish Thy word to Thy servant, as that which produces reverence for Thee.
³⁹ Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Thine ordinances are good.
⁴⁰ Behold, I long for Thy precepts; revive me through Thy righteousness.
⁴¹ May Thy lovingkindness also come to me, O Lord, Thy salvation according to Thy word;
⁴² So I shall have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust Thy word.
⁴³ And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for I wait for Thine ordinances.
⁴⁴ So I will keep Thy law continually, forever and ever.
⁴⁵ And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy precepts.
⁴⁶ I will also speak of Thy testimonies before kings, and shall not be ashamed.
⁴⁷ And I shall delight in Thy commandments, which I love.
⁴⁸ And I shall lift up my hands to Thy commandments, which I love; and I will meditate on Thy statutes.
⁴⁹ Remember the word to Thy servant, in which Thou hast made me hope.
⁵⁰ This is my comfort in my affliction, that Thy word has revived me.
⁵¹ The arrogant utterly deride me, yet I do not turn aside from Thy law.
⁵² I have remembered Thine ordinances from of old, O Lord, and comfort myself.
⁵³ Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked, who forsake Thy law.
⁵⁴ Thy statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.
⁵⁵ O Lord, I remember Thy name in the night, and keep Thy law.
⁵⁶ This has become mine, that I observe Thy precepts.

The word “commandment” is the Hebrew word *mitswah* (04687), which means a command. It is a derivative of the Hebrew word *tsqawah* (06680), which means to make firm or establish.

Go back through this passage and underline each use of the word “commandments.”

Write down what the author says about God’s commandments—

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The word “ordinance” is the Hebrew word *mishpat* (04941), which means a judicial verdict, either favorable or unfavorable. Some translations use the word “judgment.”

Go back through this passage and underline each use of the word “ordinance” or “judgment” (same word).

Write down what the author says about God’s ordinances/judgments—

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The word “precepts” is the Hebrew word *piqqud* (06490), which means an appointment or allocation mandated by God.

Go back through this passage and underline each use of the word “precept.”

Write down what the author says about God’s precepts—

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The word “statute” is the Hebrew word *choq* (02706), which means a regulation or law which must be strictly obeyed (natural law as well as God-given).

Go back through this passage and underline each use of the word “statute.”
Write down what the author says about God’s statutes—

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The word “law” is the Hebrew word *torah* (08451), which means instruction or doctrine.

Go back through this passage and underline each use of the word “law.”

Write down what the author says about God’s laws—

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The word “testimony” is the Hebrew word *edhah* (05713), which means something that attests or witnesses.

Go back through this passage and underline each use of the word “testimony.”

Write down what the author says about God’s testimonies—

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And lastly, the word “way” is the Hebrew word *derekh* (01870), which means a journey or course, a path or a manner.

Go back through this passage and underline each use of the word “way.”

Write down what the author says about God’s ways—

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Now read this Psalm passage again and this time direct it to the Lord, making it a desire of your own heart if indeed it is. Ask Him to show you where you are weak, and where you are strong. Ask Him to show you His way, so that you may walk in it.

See you next week.