

20. The Book of Acts—3:1-10

(9/16/26)

In our study in the Book of Acts, we have recently entered into chapter 3.

As we said last time, there are several lessons that come out of this incident about the men that God uses—in that first of all:

1. They're men of prayer.

Acts 3:1 (NKJV)

¹ Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*.

According to the Jewish custom of the day—every day at 9:00 A.M., Noon, and 3:00 P.M., the Jews stopped what they were doing and headed to the Temple, where they spent an hour in prayer.

This hour began with fifteen minutes of silence where they meditated on the greatness of God, followed by thirty minutes of petition, and ending with fifteen minutes of praise and worship.

The men that God uses are first and foremost men of prayer—and that shouldn't surprise us because if I want God to use my life, I need to be in contact with Him on a daily basis.

I need to seek His guidance. I need to seek His counsel. And I should definitely not move or act independently of His divine directions.

2. They're men of faith.

Acts 3:1–10 (NKJV)

¹ Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*.
² And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;
³ who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. ⁴ And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." ⁵ So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁸ So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰ Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Now I believe that it took a great deal of faith for Peter to take the man by the right hand and lift him to his feet—but interestingly, I don't think this was Peter's faith displayed here.

Now, let me stop here and talk about faith.

Faith is a very important subject in the Bible—in fact it's so important that it is talked about in every book in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

So, needless to say, the subject of *faith* is not only important to our walk and service for God—it's critically important.

And I say that because everything God has for us in the way of power to live *for* Him and blessings *from* Him come to us as a gift that has to be received by faith if it's going to benefit us—even as Jesus said, "*According to your faith let it be done to you.*"

With that in mind, it's critical that we understand what biblical faith is.

There are 4 types of faith the Bible talks about:

A. The Shield of Faith

B. The Gift of Faith

C. Saving Faith

D. Practical Faith

A. The Shield of Faith

Ephesians 6:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

The **‘shield of faith’** is one of 6 pieces of armor that Paul talks about in Ephesians 6 that a Christian should put on every day before going out into the world to do battle against the devil and his demonic armies.

The word **‘shield’** here in the Greek is *thureon* which wasn’t the small round shield that most of us are familiar with.

That smaller shield measured about two feet in diameter and had two leather straps on the back through which the Roman soldier put his forearm and was used to defend himself in close combat with an enemy.

In contrast, a *thureon* was a large rectangular shield that usually measured about 4 1/2 ft. long by 2 ft. wide and roughly 2 inches thick.

It was made of hardwood and covered with tough leather that had been heavily oiled to help deflect incoming arrows.

The soldiers who carried these shields were on the front lines of battle.

An interesting piece of information about this Roman shield was that—the edges of these shields were made in such a way so that an entire line of soldiers could interlock their shields together and thus march at the enemy—like one solid wall!

This suggests of course that faith *united* is faith strong and victorious! (Heb.10:25)

This shield would completely protect the soldier against spears, arrows—and what Paul refers to as **‘fiery darts.’**

These were arrows dipped in pitch, set on fire, and then launched at enemy armies.

Without this large shield that protected the soldier’s entire body he would be vulnerable to these flaming missiles—yet when held in front of him the arrows would safely lodge in his shield and be extinguished or quenched.

No front-line soldier ever went out to battle without his *thureon* shield.

Paul calls our shield, the **‘*thureon* of faith’**.

The shield of faith is totally sufficient in its ability to protect us against the devil’s attacks—how do we know that?

We know it because Paul tells us that by taking up our **shield of faith**—we will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

The devil can't fire one shot at you, as a Christian, that the shield of faith can't protect you from.

Now you might be thinking—“*What do these ‘fiery-darts’ of Satan represent?*”

Well, some think they refer to various *temptations* that promote the “*works of the flesh*” (Gal. 5:19-21)—adultery, fornication, moral uncleanness, hatred, drunkenness, jealousies, violent outbursts, and even murder.

This they say are what these fiery darts are—temptations designed to inflame our flesh towards sin.

Others think they refer to Satan attacking us *emotionally* in the area of depression, anxiety, worry, fear, anger and so on.

Author and Pastor Ray Stedman—

“What are these flaming arrows that Paul speaks of? The devil's arrows come in many forms, including blue moods of depression, dark nights of fear, gray days of doubt, and more. Sometimes those arrows come in the form of evil thoughts — and they occasionally come at the most unwelcome, incongruous times. We may be reading the Bible or on our knees in prayer or thinking about something else entirely when suddenly a filthy, lewd, or blasphemous thought comes to mind. Where did that come from we wonder? But we don't need to wonder at all. It is a fiery arrow of the devil — and we should recognize it as such.

Sometimes the idea comes to our imagination that Christianity is nothing but a hoax. Maybe the miracles of the Bible can be explained as psychological manifestations. Maybe Jesus was just a victim of grandiose delusions. All Christians have had such feelings from time to time, mingled with a sense of queasy anxiety. Where do such thoughts and feelings come from? Again, these are nothing more than the fiery arrows of the evil one.”

Look, since Paul doesn't get specific—we can't be dogmatic about what these fiery darts are all about.

However, since he calls this shield “**faith**” and tells us that if we take it up daily it will protect us from these satanic missiles by neutralizing their effectiveness in our lives—and since the antithesis of faith is *doubt*—I'm wondering if that is primarily what Paul has in mind here.

That, primarily Paul is likening demonic *doubts* to ‘fiery-darts’—doubts about God’s love for us, doubts about His promises to us, doubts about His goodness toward us—in other words, doubts about His Word in general!

Remember, the context is *spiritual warfare*. (Eph.6:10-17)

The quickest way for the devil to defeat you and neutralize your effectiveness for God is to get you to doubt God, to try to twist your thinking toward Him so that (in your mind) you begin to see Him as an adversary instead of an ally.

I mean, isn’t that exactly what the enemy did with Eve in the Garden? (Explain)

Now, if this is true and these ‘*missiles from hell*’ (fiery-darts) are demonic doubts directed at us to try and get us to question the goodness, love and faithfulness of God in our lives—then the only thing that *will* counteract them is *faith*.

Ray Stedman—

“Have you learned to take up the shield of faith when doubts come? It means saying to yourself—‘Christ is the truth. He is reality. I have been convinced of His reality many times over. I have committed myself to Christ because I have been persuaded that He is the way, the truth, and the life. So, I reject this thought that Christianity is a hoax. I will continue to act in faith despite my feelings of doubt.’

Have you learned to take up the shield of faith when feelings of unworthiness come? It means saying to yourself, ‘Yes, I’ve failed God — but His promise to me is that He always accepts me. All of the great men and women of the Bible have failed God from time to time, yet God still used them, and I know He will use me. Christ is my righteousness — I am one with Him and His righteousness covers me. Nothing can separate me from the love of Christ.’

Have you learned to take up the shield of faith when depression and anxiety come? It means saying to yourself, ‘Feelings are not facts. Feelings come and go, but the truth of God is forever. I refuse to believe the lie of Satan. With the Lord Jesus Christ as my shield, I am going to cling to my faith despite my feelings.’

Have you learned to take up the shield of faith when evil thoughts arise? It means saying to yourself, ‘These evil thoughts are not my thoughts. They came into my mind as fiery arrows from the devil. I do not want these thoughts. I reject them. Lord Jesus, fill my mind with Your thoughts. Drive everything out of my mind but what You want me to think!’

This is what the Bible calls resisting the devil (see James 4:7). This is the shield of faith. Refuse to believe the lie of the devil. Take refuge in the truth of God. When you resist the devil, says James, he will flee from you. Resist those thoughts whenever they come your way, refuse to yield

your position, and sooner or later, those thoughts will clear up. Your feelings will change. The attacks will cease.”

When Paul says to **“take up the shield of faith”**—he isn’t saying that *faith* in and of itself will protect you from the devil or any other problem.

In Genesis 15:1 God said to Abraham, *“Fear not Abraham; I am your shield...”*

In Psalm 18:30 the Psalmist said, *“The Lord is a shield to all who put their trust in Him.”*

When Paul speaks of ‘*taking up the shield of faith*’—it means my faith is nothing except for what it puts in front of me—and that is God Himself!

He is the One who is my shield—not really my faith:

Proverbs 30:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Every word of God *is* pure; He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

Faith alone will do nothing for you—faith in Jesus will do everything! (Heb.12:2)

Again, faith is not a power we can use to ‘play’ God or use to control God—it is simple childlike trust in God, in His power, promises and Person (His character).

The shield of faith is totally sufficient in its ability to protect us against the devil’s attacks.

Again, the devil can’t fire one shot at you, as a Christian, that the shield of faith can’t protect you from—as Paul assures us, **“the shield of faith...will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”**

B. The Gift Faith

The ‘**gift of faith**’ (1Cor.12:9) is a supernatural *infusion* of faith given to a Christian by the Holy Spirit for the moment.

And by that I mean—it suddenly comes upon you and causes you to believe, without a doubt, that God is going to work a miracle, bring about a healing, provide a need or work in some way as the situation calls for.

It’s a special, *temporary* supernatural *gift* of faith given to you by the Holy Spirit that allows you to be a channel through which the power of God can flow.

Understand that the **gift of faith** is not a ‘*reservoir of faith*’ that is with you always, that you can ‘*dip into*’ anytime you want.

One example of this gift in operation is found in Acts 3 with the lame man that God used Peter to heal.

Later on, when Peter is explaining what happened, he said in Acts 3:16:

Acts 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Understand, this lame beggar didn’t know Jesus and therefore didn’t have any faith in Jesus that was his own—this was a gift of faith given to Peter by the Holy Spirit for that moment which God then used to heal this crippled man.

The gift of faith is given by the Holy Spirit and can’t be conjured up by those who want to see God work a miracle or healing. (Explain)

Sometimes He will give it to the person He wants to heal, and other times God will give it to the person He will use to heal someone who needs a healing.

Again, the gift of faith is a *temporary* gift given to us by the Holy Spirit when He wants to do a special work in a person's life (often when He wants to work a miracle or a healing)—when the work is completed the gift of faith comes to an end.

C. Saving Faith

The third kind of faith the Bible speaks of is **saving faith**.

Saving faith is the faith that's described in Ephesians 2—

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God [the gift is salvation not faith], ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Saving faith is exercised once in our lives—because a person is only saved once in their life.

Saving faith isn't just 'head-knowledge'—it's believing in Jesus to the point of commitment.

Jesus Christ loves people—all people—so much that He is proposing marriage to them, but without the other person accepting that proposal and making a commitment to Him—His relationship with them can't go forward.

He wants a real relationship based on loving commitment.

He already proved His commitment to us by dying for us (that's total commitment)—and He wants the same from us—as He said, "*If you want to be My disciples, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me*"—that is the language of commitment!

Now look, the Lord Jesus doesn't mind a person '*checking Him out*' before making a commitment to Him—in fact, He actually encouraged that when He challenged potential disciples to first "*count the cost*" before starting to follow Him (entering into a relationship with Him).

But make no mistake about it—Jesus isn't looking for a perpetual, casual '*dating*' relationship with you.

He's looking for a relationship based on a lifelong commitment—in other words, He wants to marry you!

But again, many church-goers are satisfied with simply 'dating' Jesus and are not interested in taking their relationship with Him deeper by making a commitment to Him.

A commitment to love Him, serve Him, and to stay loyal to Him no matter what life brings their way—whether blessings or hardships, sunshine or storms—for the rest of their lives.

This is the kind of commitment Jesus is looking for from those who are thinking of following Him—which is why the Bible talks about salvation in *marriage* terms calling Jesus our Bridegroom and Christians the Bride of Christ.

Again, the problem with many churchgoers is they're satisfied with having a superficial, casual relationship with Jesus but have no desire to take things 'to the next level'—the marriage level by making a serious lifelong commitment to Him!

Here the Lord is proposing marriage to them (salvation) and their response is—"*Jesus, I just want us to be friends.*"

But there can be no salvation without believing in Jesus to the point of commitment and receiving Him as your Savior—and Bridegroom!

Many today say they ‘believe’ in Jesus—but when they say that to me, I like to ask them—

“What exactly do you mean when you say you believe in Jesus? Do you mean that you believe in the facts of Who Jesus is and what He did—in other words that He is the Son of God, Who died on the cross for your sins and three days later rose from the dead?”

They often respond, “Yes, *that’s what I mean*”—to which I respond, “*The Bible says that even the demons believe that and tremble!*” (James 2:19)

To be saved you must take your ‘*passive*’ faith (head knowledge) and bring it to the next level and make it ‘*active*’ faith—which means believing to the point of commitment!

Casual Christianity has become a real problem in the Church today, where too many professing Christians just want to be ‘*friends*’ with Jesus instead of making a full-on commitment to Him (as in marriage).

And again, saving faith is only exercised *once* in a person’s life—however, there is a faith that we do exercise *everyday* of our lives once we are saved—it’s the last kind of faith on our list.

D. Practical Faith

Practical faith is sometimes referred to as ‘*sanctifying faith*’—because the more you exercise it, the closer to God you get—which in turn means the more sanctified you become. (Explain)

A classic verse on the subject of *practical* faith is found in Hab. 2:4 (quoted 3 times in the N.T.)—“*the just shall live by faith...*”

Saving faith is the faith of a moment which affects my eternity—*practical* faith is moment by moment faith which affects my daily life.

Practical faith is so important to our Christian lives that the Holy Spirit devotes an entire chapter to the subject of practical faith in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews chapter 11 has been called by some the greatest chapter in the NT—and the reason being is because once we are saved by faith, we start on a journey with the Lord whereby we must learn to live by faith every day.

Hebrews 11 starts out with the best definition of faith you'll find anywhere in the Bible—

Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV)

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

Is the writer saying that whatever a Christian *hopes* for (whatever they desire) if they believe strong enough it will be theirs?—NO! (1John 5:14-15)

Look, God is gracious and will often give us things we ask for even if He hasn't specifically promised those things to us in His Word (a new bike for our son or daughter; or a nice vacation for the family that we can't afford) but He graciously gives them to us anyway because He loves us and wants to bless our lives.

However, these things are not promised to us by God in His Word and therefore are not a sure hope (a guaranteed thing).

And what are the things He *has* promised us in His Word that are a sure hope you ask?

Well, simply put, they are things that deal with our eternity, things like:

- *Forgiveness of sins and salvation*
- *Heavenly inheritance someday*
- *Eternal rewards and glory with the Lord*
- *An existence without pain, sorrow, suffering, tears, hunger, thirst, sickness, or death*

Furthermore, once we have put our faith in Jesus, He has promised to provide our *physical* needs because He is our Father, and we are His children (Luke 11:11-13)

Peter said that the Lord has given to His children many “*great and precious promises!*”

And so, these promises become the focus of our faith and the certainty of our hope—that what God has promised He is able and willing to give to us!