

GOD'S ECONOMY IN FAITH

(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

Taking Up the Shield of Faith, Experiencing the Proving of Our Faith, and Receiving the End of Our Faith—the Salvation of Our Souls

Scripture Reading: Eph. 6:12, 14-16; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5;
1 Pet. 1:7, 9; 4:12, 16; Heb. 10:35, 37, 39

I. As members of the Body of Christ engaged in warfare “against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies,” we need to take up the shield of faith, with which we “will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one”—Eph. 6:12, 16:

- A. The shield of faith is not something that we put on but something that we take up in order to protect ourselves against the attacks of the enemy and to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one—v. 16.
- B. We need to realize that faith is a shield placed between us and Satan:
 - 1. Faith is a safeguard against the flaming darts of the enemy—accusations, temptations, proposals, doubts, questionings, lies, snares, and attacks—2 Cor. 2:11.
 - 2. Satan's flaming darts come as thoughts injected into our mind; these thoughts may seem to be our own thoughts, but they are thoughts coming from Satan.
 - 3. When the darts come, they hit the shield, and we are able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one—Eph. 6:16.
- C. Faith comes after truth, righteousness, and peace—vv. 14-15:
 - 1. We need the truth to gird our loins, righteousness to cover our conscience, peace as the standing for our feet, and faith to shield our entire being.
 - 2. If we have truth in our living, righteousness as our covering, and peace as our standing, we will spontaneously have faith—vv. 14-16.
- D. The shield of faith has several aspects: faith in God (Mark 11:22), faith in God's heart (Rom. 8:31-39), faith in God's faithfulness (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:9), faith in God's ability (Eph. 3:20), faith in God's word (John 6:63, 68; Acts 20:32), faith in God's will (Eph. 1:9, 11), and faith in God's sovereignty (Rom. 9:19-29).

II. First Peter 1:7 speaks of the proving of our faith:

- A. The proving of faith is the testing for approval; the Greek word rendered “proving” means “testing for approval.”
- B. We are put into trials because our faith needs to be tested, approved—4:12.
- C. No one who has believed in the Lord and has received grace can avoid the testing of faith—John 3:15, 36; 1:16.
- D. The Bible shows that there is no faith without testing; all faith must be tested—1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12:
 - 1. God tests our faith in order that we may grow in faith and in life—Eph. 4:15:
 - a. No Christian can grow without first having his faith tested.

- b. When our faith is tested, we spontaneously grow—1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Cor. 3:6-7.
 - 2. God tests our faith to satisfy Himself—proving that we have genuine faith—1 Pet. 1:7:
 - a. It is genuine faith that satisfies God—1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5.
 - b. A faith that is approved is a glory to God's name—1 Pet. 4:11; John 12:28:
 - (1) God's name is glorified in this world through an approved faith—1 Pet. 1:7.
 - (2) When we pass through tribulations, persecutions, obstacles, and darkness, and we still believe after these tests and still stand fast after these trials, this faith will glorify God's name—2:12; 4:12, 16.
- E. The approval of faith comes out of the proper faith; the stress here is not on faith but on the proving of faith by trials that come through sufferings—1:7.
- F. In verse 7 Peter says that the proving of our faith is “much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire”:
 - 1. The words *much more precious than of gold...by fire* do not modify *faith*; they modify *proving*.
 - 2. This means that the proving of our faith is much more precious than the proving of gold:
 - a. The comparison here is that between the proving of our faith and the proving of gold.
 - b. Gold is proved by the purifying fire; in like manner, our faith is proved by trial.
- G. It is the trying, the proving, of faith, not the faith itself, that may be found unto praise—vv. 7-8:
 - 1. This is like the school's examination of the student's studying: what is found to be approved is the examination, not the student's studying itself.
 - 2. If the proving of our faith is positive, the proving will result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ—vv. 7-8:
 - a. The Lord is with us today (Matt. 28:20) but in a hidden, veiled way.
 - b. His coming back will be His revelation, when He will be seen openly by all—Rev. 1:7.
 - c. At that time not only He but also the proving of our faith will be revealed.

III. The proving of our faith being found unto praise, glory, and honor results in receiving the end of our faith—the salvation of our souls—1 Pet. 1:9:

- A. The salvation in verse 5 is full salvation, ultimate salvation, the salvation of the Triune God; it refers specifically to the salvation of our souls from the dispensational punishment of the Lord's governmental dealing at His coming back.
- B. This is the salvation—the salvation of our souls—which is ready to be revealed to us at the last time, the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ in glory; the salvation of our souls is the end of our faith—vv. 9, 13; Matt. 16:27.
- C. Our soul will be saved from sufferings into the full enjoyment of the Lord at His revelation, His coming back—25:31:

1. For this salvation we must deny our soul, our soulish life, with all its pleasures in this age so that we may gain it in the enjoyment of the Lord in the coming age—10:37-39; 16:24-27; Luke 17:30-33; John 12:25:
 - a. To lose the soul-life means to lose the enjoyment of the soul, and to save the soul-life means to preserve the soul in its enjoyment—Matt. 16:25.
 - b. We will either lose our soul-life today and gain it in the coming age, or save our soul-life today and lose it in the coming age.
 - c. If we would enter into the Lord's joy in the coming age, we need to pay the price in this age by losing our soul-life—25:21, 23.
2. At the Lord's revelation, through His judgment seat, some believers will enter into the joy of the Lord, and some will suffer in weeping and gnashing of teeth—vv. 21, 23; 24:45-46; 25:30; 24:51.
3. To enter into the Lord's joy is the salvation of our souls—Heb. 10:39:
 - a. The saving, or gaining, of our soul depends on how we deal with our soul in following the Lord after we are saved and regenerated.
 - b. If we lose our soul now for the Lord's sake, we will save it, and it will be saved, or gained, at the Lord's coming back—Luke 9:24; 1 Pet. 1:9.
 - c. The gaining of the soul will be the reward of the kingdom to the overcoming followers of the Lord—Heb. 10:35; Matt. 16:22-28.
- D. The power of God is able to guard us unto this salvation so that we may obtain it; the power of God is the cause of our being guarded, and faith is the means through which the power of God becomes effective in guarding us—1 Pet. 1:5.
- E. We should eagerly expect this marvelous, full, and ultimate salvation and prepare ourselves for its splendid revelation—Rom. 8:19, 23.