

Ephesians 6:16

Hilltown Baptist Church, 2006

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"...beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called..."
Ephesians 4:1

The Christian's Armor: Part 4 – The Shield of Faith

On the left side of the soldier's body was his trusty shield (scutum). Measuring approximately 4' high and 2' wide, it was semi-circular as opposed to flat. The shield was built out of several layers of wood bound in iron or bronze around the edges and often covered in leather which could be dipped in water.

Its shape was designed in this way so that any missiles thrown at the soldier would be deflected to one side. This would mean less effort by the soldier would be needed to defend himself. If the scutum was flat, a rock hitting the scutum would make a direct impact, which meant the soldier's arms would have to absorb the power generated by the missile. Being curved, the scutum would send the missile off to one side, so there would be less effort needed to deflect the energy transmitted to the soldier's body. The wetted surface would extinguish the darts if they had been dipped in pitch and lit on fire.

The scutum was not only a defensive tool, it was a weapon in its own right. The central raised portion in the middle (umbo) was forged from one piece iron or bronze and was not only used as protection for the left hand, but also as a weapon. The raised boss would be thrust into the enemy's face or chest, causing severe injury and disabling them.

A number of formations using the shields were used by the Roman army including the tortoise (modern day armored division) and the phalanx. The phalanx was a line of soldiers with interlocked shields, which moved as one and could stretch up to a mile in length.





Up to 500 soldiers would be deployed in a line, shoulder to shoulder facing the enemy. The shield (scutum) is held slightly away from the body so the soldier can move it up and down to block incoming missiles

They would wait for the enemy to come close, then as one they would take a step forward and thrust their scuta into the bodies of faces of the enemy, causing them to lose balance and so render them vulnerable.

The scutum is then withdrawn and the sword (gladius) is thrust into the body of the opponent. Note the way in which the gladius is deployed horizontally to pass between the enemy's ribs into his vital organs.

Function of the Shield for the Roman Soldier:

- Both **OFFENSIVE** and **DEFENSIVE**.
- Important for the **INDIVIDUAL** and the **GROUP**.
- Protected the soldier from **VARIOUS TYPES** of assault.

Faith for the Christian:

- At the very heart of Biblical faith is **TRUST** which is only as secure as its **OBJECT**; and for the saint, that object is God Himself, THE truth.

Pistis (4102) “In general, it implies such a knowledge of, assent to, and confidence in certain divine truths, especially those of the gospel, as produces good works.” (Zodhiates, The Complete Word Study New Testament)

- Faith is the **GIFT** of God required for our salvation. (Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 12:2)
- Faith is the **EVIDENCE** of our salvation. (Heb. 11:1)
- The believer **LIVES** and **WALKS** by faith. (Rom. 1:17; II Cor. 5:7)
- Faith **OVERCOMES** the world. (I John 5:4)

The three elements of faith for a believer: (Spurgeon's labels)

(1) **KNOWLEDGE**: The revealed truth of God, Christ, and man's sinfulness.

(2) **BELIEF**: Spirit regenerated man can lay hold of those truths.

"It now remains to pour into the heart itself what the mind has absorbed. For the Word of God is not received by faith if it flits about the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart that it may be an invincible defense to withstand and drive off all the stratagems of temptation."(Calvin's Institutes)

(3) **TRUST**: God calls us to radical discipleship. (Luke 9:23-24)

"Commitment (trust) is the point at which we pass over the line from belonging to ourselves and become the Lord's disciples." (Boice – Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace? pg. 140)

Application: How do we as 21st century Christians "wield" the shield of faith?

"While faith, basically considered, must be divinely inwrought, it is ever increasing as the knowledge of God and experience in His fellowship advances." (Chafer – Systematic Theology Vol. 7, pg. 148)

20 Q Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?

A The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ (1Ti 2:5), who being the eternal Son of God, became man (Joh 1:14) and so was and continues to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person for ever (1Ti 3:16 Col 2:9).

A Puritan Catechism with Proofs, C.H. Spurgeon 1855